

Saipan Tribune

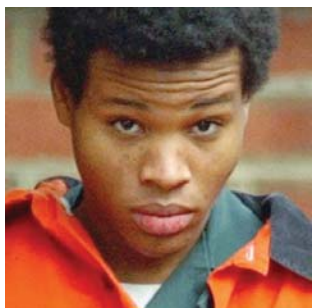
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIII, Issue No. 353

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INSIDE



Life For Sniper

The jury in the Washington sniper case Tuesday spared Lee Boyd Malvo from the fate awaiting his mentor John Allen Muhammad—the death penalty—after his lawyers portrayed him as an impressionable boy who had fallen under Muhammad's murderous spell.

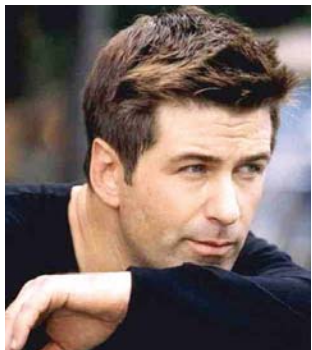
Page 20



Bird Flu

South Korean authorities have marked nearly one million chickens and ducks for slaughter to help contain a highly contagious bird flu spreading throughout the country, officials said.

Page 29



Wide & Handsome

Alec Baldwin would like to star in a remake of the 1968 adaptation of John Cheever's classic short story "The Swimmer." The original starred Burt Lancaster, age fiftysomething, as Neddy Merrill, who gently trespasses into the back yards of a pristine suburban archipelago, swimming from pool to pool...

Page 39

New Garapan comes to light

Babauta: Garapan is for upscale, family-friendly shops

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The government intends to impose restrictions on the type of business that can operate in Garapan as it aims to transform the area from being "a red district" into a tourist and family-friendly area.

"We want to move out gambling places and girly shows and replace them with upscale retail and family-friendly businesses," said Gov. Juan N. Babauta in his recent remarks before tourism industry leaders.

This, as government and private sector officials led the ground-breaking Friday of a nearly \$4-million pedestrian mall project on Third Street,

known now as the Promenade.

Among others, Babauta said this project will improve the area's storm water drainage system and the overall appearance of the place.

"We'll be installing benches and restrooms to make this a friendlier and more comfortable place to stroll around and to shop at," he said.

See NEW on Page 8



LIBERTY DONES

Maeda Pacific Corp. general manager Tom Nielsen shows the nearly \$4-million Promenade mall project perspective during a recent groundbreaking ceremony in Garapan. Maeda has committed to finish the project, which aims to transform the Garapan street into a more pleasant and tourist-friendly destination by June 2004.

OPA: Delinquent govt audits down by half

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Good news from the Office of the Public Auditor.

The number of delinquent audit recommendations among government agencies is down by nearly 50 percent, according to OPA.

In a report to Gov. Juan N. Babauta dated Dec. 1, 2003, Public Auditor

Michael S. Sablan said that as of June 2003, government agencies have responded to his office's instructions resulting in the closure of 25 recommendations.

"I am pleased to report that the actions by the various government agencies to address outstanding audit recommendations resulted in the closure of 25 [recommendations], and the reclassification of some recommendations from delinquent to active status."



Sablan

"The number of delinquent recommendations decreased by 48 percent as of June 30, 2003," said Sablan.

The previous year, the OPA, which tracks the recommendations

See OPA on Page 8

'No money to compensate businesses'

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The government failed to get permission from the federal government to use capital improvement project funds as compensation for affected businesses in connection with the construction of the nearly \$4 million Promenade Mall project in Garapan.

"The DOI (Department of the Interior) said 'no' we can't use CIP money for compensation or acquisition," said Jordan in a recent interview.

He said the Attorney General's Office has also looked whether the government is obligated to compensate businesses, and found a case which cites compensation to business loss but he said it contains a very stringent condition that may prove inapplicable locally.

Some business owners, who left Garapan due to the impending construction, earlier lambasted the government for its apparent lack of concern for them.

Gary Baldwin of Cholees Gift Shop, which closed down last weekend, said that affected businesses are entitled to some form of compensation.

See NO MONEY on Page 8

CPA opens records to US Attorney's Office

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority submitted all pertinent documents pertaining to the Sugar Dock ferry project to the U.S. Attorney's Office, which earlier subpoenaed several individuals in light of mounting protests against the project.

CPA executive director Carlos H. Salas said that after the summons made by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the ports authority

See CPA on Page 8

Local



Members of the Saipan Fil-Am Lions Club gather at the main hall of DFS Galleria to sing Christmas carols for the establishment's shoppers.

Fil-Am Lions Club serenade DFS shoppers

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Members of the Saipan Filipino-American Lions Club serenaded DFS Galleria shoppers Wednesday night to raise funds to finance numerous civic-oriented projects in the Northern Marianas.

Saipan Fil-American Lions Club officers and members assembled at the main DFS hall and sang a string of Christmas carols around 8pm as part of their fundraising efforts.

According to District 204 public relations officer Pol Urcia, the group's Christmas caroling activity started last Dec. 8 and ran until Dec. 17. The group serenaded various establishments on the island to raise funds.

Urcia said the Saipan Fil-American Lions Club raised more than \$1,000 in cash throughout the 10-night activity, with Mobil Oil donating \$500 even without the group singing a single tune.

"We sent solicitation letters to different establishments and companies and asked them to help us in this fundraising activ-

ity. A lot of them gave their support and the money will go to our projects including our gift-giving activities this holiday season," he added.

The project, which was conceptualized by the caroling committee led by Lions Eli Arago and Efren Cacadac, was aimed at raising money to finance several important projects.

The Saipan Fil-American Lions Club has been committed to various community projects and services including the Sight Conservation Project, which helps indigent students from different schools. The program sends deserving students to get free eye check-up and free eyeglasses at the Seventh-day Adventist Clinic through the assistance of the Fil-American Lions Club on Saipan.

The organization also provides free transportation to students seeking medical attention in off-island hospitals; it assists fire victims and gives gifts to children with disabilities. The group most recently repainted road bumps and pavilions in Pao Pao Beach.

baby news

uno shop

Visitor arrivals up for 3rd straight month

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The number of visitors who entered the CNMI last November increased compared with the same period last year—the third consecutive month that showed positive growth in tourist statistics.

At the same time, MVA managing director Jonas Ogren is projecting a remarkable 325-percent growth for the Chinese market this fiscal year—provided that its government grants the CNMI “Approved Destination Status.”

Although the total growth for the month was slight at 1.27 percent, the actual tally surpassed October’s 38,512 total. The MVA recorded some 42,496

visitors last month.

The November figures are based on the MVA’s preliminary report distributed to the agency’s members yesterday during a bi-annual membership meeting at the Hotel Nikko Saipan.

The MVA is also anticipating an improvement in CNMI’s tourism this fiscal year, with more airline seats becoming available to ferry tourists from the CNMI’s premier market, Japan.

Earlier, the MVA cited Northwest Airlines’ inauguration of direct flights between Saipan and Nagoya, Japan, which is the CNMI’s second largest source of Japanese tourists. It also cited the new daily services from Haneda and resumption of flights from Kansai by JALWAYS.

The Japanese market remained strong in November, posting a 22-percent increase compared with November 2002’s 26,772. Some 32,781 visited the islands last month.

Even though global events such as the Iraq war and the SARS outbreak impacted on international travel, the MVA claimed that the CNMI fared better compared with other destinations as re-

gards the Japanese market.

The MVA said its aggressive marketing campaign of the CNMI resulted in free multi-million-dollars worth of exposure to different markets,

including Japan.

“During the period, the CNMI posted declines in arrivals but was not dramatic compared with other destinations,” said MVA’s Judy Torres.

cbcruz

hana

conwood

movie station

mcdo

AT alternative financing program for CNMI eyed

The RESNA Alternative Financing Technical Assistance Project disclosed that a consultant from the Trankilu Loan Programs of the CNMI will conduct a technical assistance visit on Saipan next year.

In a letter addressed to Governor's Council for Developmental Disabilities executive director Thomas Camacho, AFTAP project manager Nancy Meidenbauer said that on-site consultation with Dr. Joseph Wallace is scheduled for March 3-5, 2004.

"The purpose of this visit is to meet with project staff, the project board, and stakeholders to plan the implementation of an AT alternative financing program for the Northern Mariana Islands," she added.

Meidenbauer said the RESNA Alternative Financing Technical Assistance Project is funded by a grant to provide technical assistance and information to states and territories that have alternative financing programs and to those that are potential AFP grantees.

"The RESNA/AFTAP will pay for the four-day visit of Dr. Wallace, his consultation time to prepare for the meeting, facilitate the board/stakeholders meeting, work with loan program staff and possibly meet with potential bank partners and conduct follow-up communication after the visit. RESNA/AFTAP also agrees to pay for Dr. Wallace's time for travel, transportation expenses to CNMI and travel related expenses," the project manager told Camacho.

She explained that the four-

day visit would prepare for a board/stakeholders meeting for implementing the Trankilu Loan program; provide an overview of how financial loan programs have been established by other states and how they work; describe some options that CNMI could take when establishing its program, given the resources and environment of CNMI; form a workgroup to further plan for implementing an AFP loan program; work with staff to develop loan program policies and procedures.

Also, she said that the visit would help the GDCC develop a Request For Proposal for a lending partner and for a community-based organization, as well as to discuss possible recruitment strategies for a loan program coordinator. The program is also aimed at determining what additional technical assistance might be needed.

Meidenbauer said that the visit is already planned, and that a draft agenda based upon these goals had been submitted to the GDCC for its perusal. She asked Camacho to finalize the agenda prior to the March 2004 visit.

"Participants who will most likely attend the board/stakeholders meeting include staff from the Council on Developmental Disabilities, Trankilu Board members, and other interested stakeholders, such as representatives of advocacy organizations, Independent living centers, and lending institutions. The work group will be derived from this larger group," she added. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

VFW hosts Christmas lunch party for elderly

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars hosted a special luncheon party for senior citizens during an early treat Tuesday at the Aging Center in celebration of the Yuletide season.

Also, the Christmas treat was part of the VFW's commitment to give something back to the community, specifically the senior citizens, most of whom have first-hand experience of difficult times during the invasion period.

VFW past commander Peter Callaghan said the luncheon treat was first held three years ago. "It is to show our appreciation to the man amkos and to the community as well. The association's main purpose is to show camaraderie to other units and promote patriotism."

The Christmas party was participated in by at least 25 members of the VFW and Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente.

Aging Center director Joe Palacios expressed appreciation to the VFWs' Christmas treat. "We appreciate them knowing that their association is a non-profit organization, they went

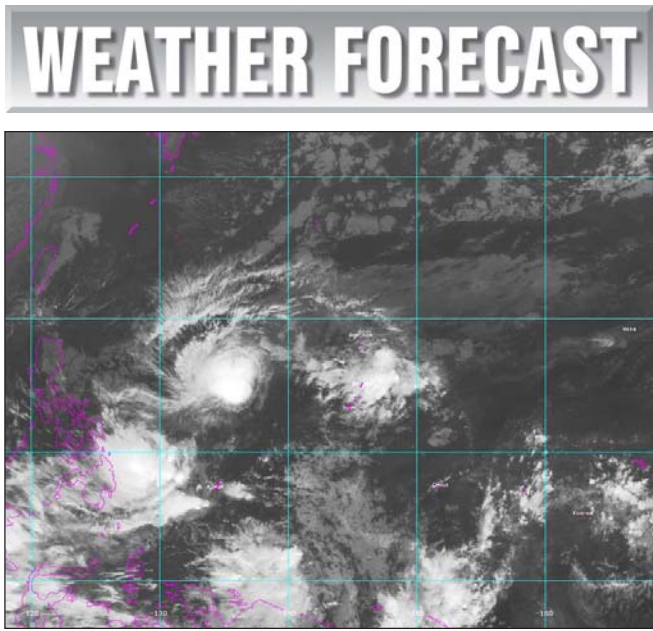
out of their way to solicit for this. They made all necessary arrangements to make it happen."

The VFWs were wearing their signature t-shirt, promoting the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Saipan and Tinian and the upcoming VFW summit on June 2004. The VFW convention is slated on June 11-18, 2004 in commemoration of the Battle of Saipan anniversary next year.

Callaghan said all preparations are now ongoing to make the event a success. The steering committee has already lined up activities for the visiting war veterans, their families and dependents. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*



Callaghan



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M., DECEMBER 23, 2003
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A monsoon trough extends from 5N130E to a weak circulation near 5N135E then ends near 10N139E. Strong low-level convergence along the trough is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms northwest of Palau and Yap in an area bounded by 18N130E to 19N140E to 14N140E to 6N134E to 5N130E then back to 17N130E...and across the Mariana Islands and Chuuk between the equator and 18N from 140E to 154E. Further east...trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers north of Kosrae between 5N and 9N from 161E to 164E...and across southern half of the Marshall Islands between the equator and 10N from 166E to 180. Low clouds are found about 300 miles north and northwest of a dissipating shear line from 25N180E to 19N145E.



SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Southeast at 10 mph. Highs near 80. Lows near 70.



GUAM AND ROTA
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Southeast at 10 mph. Highs near 80. Lows near 70.



PALAU
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Southeast at 10 kt.



POHNPEI
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



YAP AND ULITHI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt. or less.



CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt.



MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
Auckland	Cloudy	64F (18C)	52F (11C)
Beijing	Sunny	34F (1C)	15F (-9C)
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	75F (24C)	62F (17C)
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	83F (28C)	70F (21C)
London, England	Shower	52F (11C)	42F (6C)
Los Angeles	Shower	64F (18C)	43F (6C)
Manila	Cloudy	82F (28C)	69F (21C)
Melbourne	Sunny	79F (26C)	57F (14C)
Miami	Cloudy	77F (25C)	66F (19C)
New York City	Partly Cloudy	44F (7C)	32F (0C)
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	54F (12C)	34F (1C)
Paris	Partly Cloudy	46F (8C)	38F (3C)
Pusan	Sunny	52F (11C)	25F (-4C)
Rome	Partly Cloudy	44F (7C)	42F (6C)
Salem, Oregon	Rain	46F (8C)	34F (1c)
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	56F (13C)	44F (7C)
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	40F (4C)	12F (-11C)
Tokyo, Japan	Sunny	57F (14C)	45F (7C)
Washington, DC	Sunny	44F (7C)	30F (-1C)

BOE reviews new 7-year CIP proposal

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The Board of Education is reviewing its proposal for a new seven-year capital improvement project that will be submitted to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

BOE chairman Herman T. Guerrero said the Public School System may introduce changes to the proposal, which was drafted last year. “We’re reviewing it to see what needs to be amended,” he said.

Information contained in the proposal has not been formally discussed with federal authorities.

The PSS had submitted a \$34-million federal funding request for the construction of three new schools on Saipan, over 50 more classrooms, gymnasiums, and other school facilities throughout the islands.

This was contained in the PSS’ educational infrastructure report submitted to Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente last December for inclusion in the Covenant Sections 702 and 902 negotiations.

The government had expected to begin Covenant negotiations with DOI’s David Cohen in early January 2003 but this has not materialized up to now.

Based on the PSS report, Saipan needs some \$30.5 million; Northern Islands, \$950,000; Tinian Head Start, \$80,000; and Rota, \$3.1 million.

Education commissioner Rita H. Inos said three new schools would have to be built on Saipan in view of the increasing population in some villages. These schools would include the As Matuis Elementary School worth \$6.5 million, including collateral equipment and other infrastructures; a second Kagman Elementary School, \$6.5 million; and a Marpi secondary school, \$7 million.

Inos said G.T. Camacho Elementary School currently serves the San Roque area but four of its six buildings need renovation to meet safety standards.

Depending on the growth rate, a portion of the G.T. Camacho School may be converted into Head Start classrooms.

Inos said Kagman, which is the fastest growing area on Saipan, needs a new elementary school to accommodate projected students in five years. Kagman registers a growth rate of 5 percent—or 38 students per year.

Inos said the PSS needs to secure some five hectares of property for the new school. An elementary school requires a minimum area of 4.5 hectares, while a secondary school needs a minimum of seven to 10 hectares, depending on the type of needed facilities.

The PSS report said Kagman High School, which opened in August 2002, will need 10 more classrooms with restrooms and

other infrastructures, including a parking facility with asphalt pavement. This would need \$700,000, based on a \$70,000-budget per classroom.

A gymnasium (\$2.5 million) and a track and field (\$240,000) for the high school are also needed.

PSS said the secondary student population in Marpi, with an

estimated 8 percent growth rate, may double within five years.

“Since Kagman has a secondary school, it would be appropriate to provide a secondary school to Northern Saipan,” Inos said.

Southern High School needs a parking facility, \$165,000; a gymnasium, \$2.5 million; a track and field, \$240,000; baseball diamond,

fencing, dug out, backstop and bleachers, \$105,000; and additional classrooms, \$972,000.

Other additional classrooms will be constructed in Dandan (five), San Vicente (six), Head Start (17), and Sinapalo, Rota (eight).

The PSS had recently asked the Legislature to reprogram over \$3.8 million for the immediate construction of new class-

rooms. PSS said it urgently needs the money to resolve overcrowding in four schools: Garapan and Kagman elementary schools, Kagman High School, and Saipan Southern High School, as well as the Garapan Head Start.

The board had said that 43 new classrooms need to be built to accommodate the current enrol-

ment of 10,790, as of Aug. 5. In a report, the board said that Kagman elementary will need 17 new classrooms, Garapan needs seven, Saipan Southern High School, six; Kagman High, two; GTC Elementary, three; and Dandan, two; while Oleai, San Vicente, San Antonio need one new classroom each.

Note: With mug of Herman T. Guerrero
dehins na kasya

nikko

saipan
computer

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Gore's Game

There goes Al Gore again. Remaking himself. Remaking the Democratic Party. Remaking America. Or so he says.

The former Democratic nominee for president shook up the 2004 Democratic presidential race by endorsing Howard Dean for the nomination. Gore's blessing gives the former Vermont governor, who has been running as an insurgent, the patina of support from the party establishment. And it solidifies Dean's position as the front-runner for the nomination, as unlikely as that may seem.

Does that mean the race is over? Not so fast! Not when there hasn't been a vote cast yet. There's too much about Dean that isn't known. And it is ridiculously presumptive of the media, us included, to award the nomination before any real Democratic voters have been heard from. Let's wait for Iowa, New Hampshire and then all the big states to weigh in.

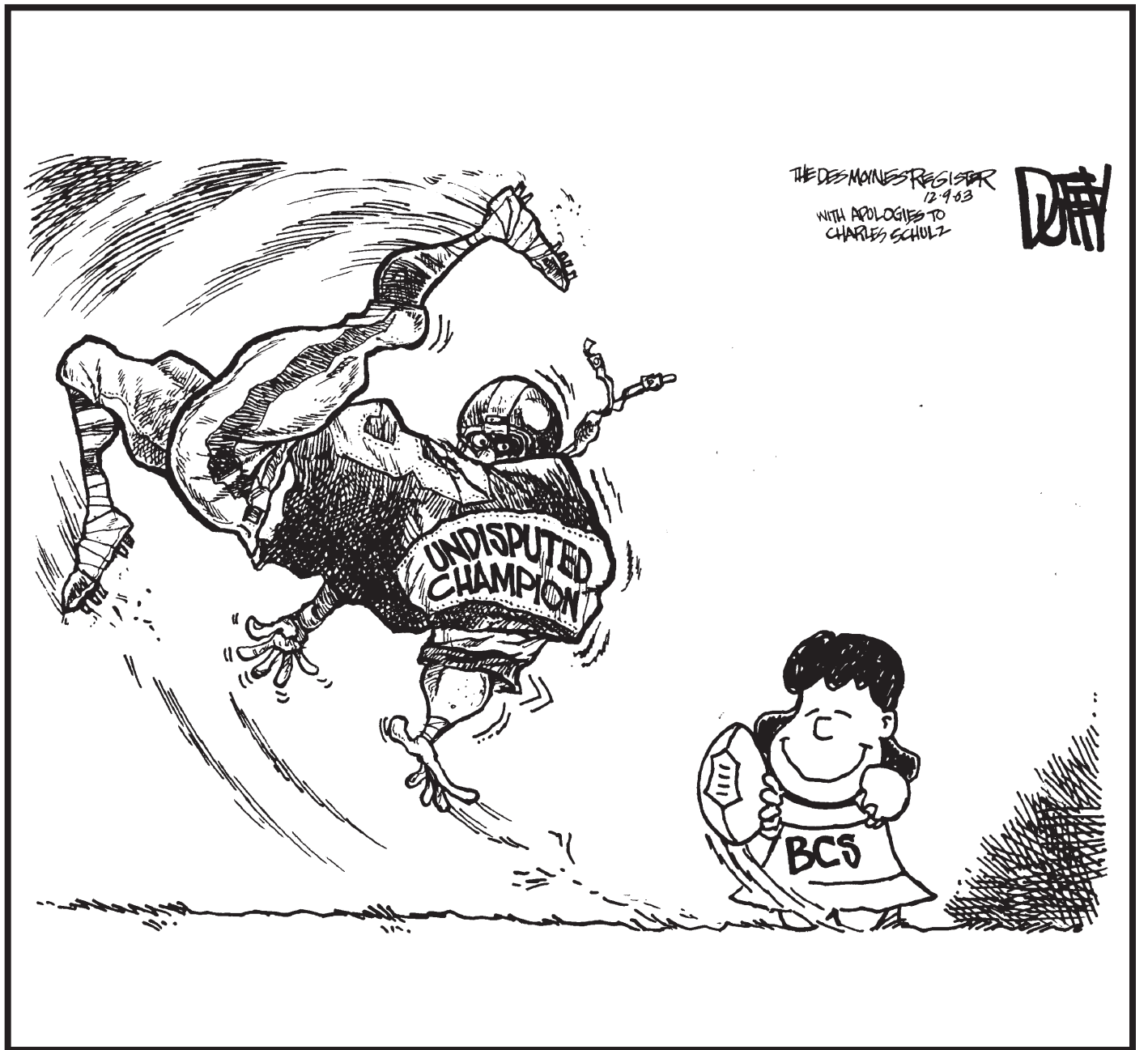
Still, Gore's announcement in the city yesterday was a stunner. Insiders say Gore, who models himself a futurist, was taken with Dean's New Age campaign, especially his use of the Internet to connect with young voters. And Gore, the former vice president, agreed with Dean's early opposition to the war in Iraq.

But while Gore's endorsement will help Dean's candidacy gain a certain credibility, Gore is a somewhat tarnished figure who has grown smaller since he lost the contested election to George W. Bush in 2000. One of the things that hurt Gore the most was the sense that he was constantly "remaking" himself, changing from blue suits to brown, from new Democrat to old. There was a sense of unguineness about Gore, which was not necessarily fair but still hurt him politically. Now he's saying the party has to "remake" itself.

What's his game? Some people were upset that Gore didn't even bother to notify his 2000 running mate, Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, that he was endorsing Dean. It's legitimate to ask how Gore could have chosen Lieberman to be the man to run the nation if anything happened to him and now bypass Lieberman for a man with no Washington experience.

Maybe Gore wants to pick up the New Age voting base that Dean has attracted and use it himself for a run in 2008 if Bush is re-elected. Remake or no, it's still all about politics.

Newsday



Nothing beats a direct flight

For Filipinos—and other members of the community who travel between the Northern Marianas and the Philippines, Continental Airlines' decision to start serving the Saipan-Manila route again is a welcome development. It practically shortens the flying time, thus, making it a stress-free process.

Majority of us have our own personal encounters with a layover—either on Guam or in Seoul, South Korea. And more often than not, it is more straining than fun, no matter how big the airport is or how good the shops are, and how short the layover time is.

I have personal encounters with a layover that is longer than the actual trip itself. I still unfortunately remember strolling around the Guam International Airport for 10 grueling hours when I was once sent to Palau for an assignment. I was literally trapped inside the Guam airport because I didn't have a U.S. visa then to allow me entry into the island-territory.

Just this year, I had to wait 12 backbreaking hours inside South Korea's Incheon International Airport when I attended—together with journalists from all over Asia—a roundtable discussion on migration issues in Bangkok, Thailand.

My Palau and Thailand trips are not what you would say a regular destination among most of us, especially Filipino non-resident workers in the CNMI who mostly touch base once every year. But this year's suspension of the Transit Without Visa program forced a big number of us away from the usual Saipan-Guam-Manila flights offered by Continental Airlines into Asiana Airlines' Saipan-Incheon-Manila service, or Northwest Airlines' Saipan-Japan-Manila route.

There's nothing wrong with stopping over Incheon or Narita on our way to the Philippines but there are also some factors to consider. It's still cheap to take Asiana's Saipan-Incheon-Manila flight but the route practically lengthens the traveling time: 2 hours advance check-in plus 3.5 hours flying time from Saipan to South Korea plus 2 hours layover in Incheon plus about 3 hours flying time from Seoul to Manila equals about 10 exhausting hours of traveling.

Yet still, many travelers put more weight on the extra money they would save by sacrificing a little time strolling around South Korea's gorgeous Incheon airport, with all the fascinating retail shops

By ALDWIN R. FAJARDO

The views expressed are strictly that of the author.
Fajardo is the editor of the Saipan Tribune.



and food establishments sprawling inside it.

Northwest also offers a very tempting package for Manila-bound travelers but it doesn't seem to suit most Filipino workers' travel desires due to strict visa requirements implemented by the Japanese government. Still, a possible visit to the Tokyo Disneyland is still a major thing to consider.

A direct service between Saipan and Manila is the best solution to Philippine-bound passengers' traveling dilemma. Bottom line is, nothing beats a direct service, especially if the destination is only about three hours away from the point of origin.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

We are now in the process of reviewing the accomplishments of those who have made it to the final list of nominees for the annual Saipan Tribune Person of the Year. The Tribune gives this award each year—now on its fifth year—to recognize the efforts and commitment of those who untiringly and consistently do their part in making the CNMI a better place to live in.

Like last year, we will be naming one Person of the Year for 2003 and nine honorable mentions. Nominees are judged based on the impacts of their contributions or efforts on the lives or overall well-being of the people or the community they intended to serve.

Among those who have been recognized in the last five years were: HIV/AIDS educator Moses Saburo (1999); Ports Authority executive director Carlos Salas and then-board chairman Roman S. Palacios, and then-House Speaker Ben Fitial (2000); David Borja, former principal of Hopwood Junior High School (2001); and Rota Mayor Benjamin T. Manglona for 2002.

Who will it be this year?

The adult GPA

Whether it's the Commonwealth seeking to float \$40 million in bonds, or your brother in law trying to finance a car, it seems like every entity and living being on the planet has got a credit rating and credit score appended to their name.

Oh, yuck, credit scores. Does anyone really want to hear about those?

Well, the good citizens of the Commonwealth should, given that the ghost of the Union Bank of California may be haunting your financial records. UBOC is long gone from our shores, but if you held a UBOC credit card, you may have been subjected to a little surprise. At issue is the fact that UBOC actually transferred some or all (I've been told it was all) of its credit card business to another company.

The transfer actually pre-dated UBOC's exodus from our fair shores, and the two events were entirely unrelated.

If you ever dealt with UBOC, you'll recall that they were a prime bank, a quality outfit. UBOC, is a corporate cousin of the Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi, and the Japanese focus on excellent customer service was certainly a hallmark of UBOC's operations. First Hawaiian Bank, as you know, picked up UBOC's action here and retained many of the excellent staffers, which was good news for the community.

On the less happy end of things, when UBOC slipped its credit card business to another company, things didn't end so well. You have to be very careful who you deal with in the credit card industry, since not all companies are honorable.

As for any former UBOC customers, then, you should review your records carefully. If you have a credit card that has "Union Bank of California" stamped on the front, it may not really be issued by UBOC. Yikes! If you find some unknown company lurking in the background on that one, I'd advise closing the account immediately and taking your business to another place. This is a "consumer alert" from me, and I'll be happy to compile reader feedback on this note, so feel free to e-mail me any experience you may have had along these lines. I have uncovered some disturbing information on the topic and my interest is piqued, big time.

Since I'm on the credit topic, I'll mention that American Express, as well as at least one credit reporting agency, is selling a credit monitoring service. These guys eyeball your credit activity on a daily basis, in order to prevent identity theft or other monkey business from messing with your records. I paid 99 buckaroos to enroll in the service for one year. Cheapskate that I am, I think it's worth dropping a C-note on the deal.

Credit records have become the Grade Point Average of adult life. It's worth keeping an eye on your files.

Meanwhile, I'm gathering the writing files for next year; we've got a lot of ground to cover. The Commonwealth economy will be the hot topic, of course. And—drum roll—yours truly is preparing to launch a new business that you'll be hearing about, which is why I've been in meetings with attorneys this week and have not answered anyone's calls or e-mails. So much for goofing off during the holidays. In fact, I get so worn out planning for 2004 already that I'm wishing that 2003 would last a couple of months longer. I guess that Santa can't deliver more time to even the best of boys and girls.



By ED STEPHENS

Ed Stephens, Jr. is an economist and columnist for the Saipan Tribune. "Ed4Saipan@yahoo.com"

Some soulful memories in papa's bag

You had to take off your shoes. No shoes on the gym floor. No sneakers, either. Not if you were going to do the James Brown during a pep rally at my high school. And during those years, from 1966 to 1968, whenever the band broke into, say, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," you were going to do the James Brown.

You had to.

If Martin Luther King Jr. was telling us to stride toward freedom, Brown was showing us how to glide toward it. And of course, we all wanted to arrive in style.

Unlike the twist or the funky chicken, the James Brown required both frenzy and precision—qualities that represented the tensions of our times as we moved from the regimented life of Old South segregation (my school was Booker T. Washington High in Shreveport, La.) toward a world where you could finally say it loud, "I'm Black and I'm Proud!"

The Kennedy Center Honors that Brown received Sunday brought back those memories.

"We honor one of the most influential musicians of the last 50 years," Kennedy Center Chairman James A. Johnson said of Brown. That would put the onset of Brown's influence pretty close to the start of my life.

Last year, I read a profile of Brown in the New Yorker magazine that led me to the conclusion that given Soul Brother No. 1's troubles with the drug PCP and the police, his struggles with past wives, mistresses, girlfriends and others, along with the fallout from some peculiar political stands, he was lucky to be alive.

"Race, poverty and exclusion were the defining features of James Brown's childhood world, and he might easily have seen himself as cursed," Philip Gourevitch wrote in the New Yorker. "Instead, he seems to have understood himself to be a free agent—denied the comforts of a conventional home, but also spared its constraints—with no choice but to fight for emancipation however he could."

Did that explain Brown's weird behavior—or how he survived in spite of it? Did too much adulation and exaltation lead him to believe that he could do no wrong? A Look magazine article in 1969 declared: "James Brown is a new important leader. His constituency dwarfs Stokely Carmichael's and the late Dr. Martin Luther King's." Did such twisted statements go to his head?

All I know is that during adolescence, I'd break out in a cold



By COURTLAND MILLOY

The Washington Post

sweat right along with the Godfather of Soul. I never knew why papa needed a brand-new bag, unless it had wine in it; but I knew what to say when I got something new: "I feel good!" or "I got the feeling!"

And the only way to express that feeling was to do the James Brown—to glide on one leg, if you could, with head bobbing and fists pumping, then spin, jump and fall into a 180-degree split, then snap back up—unhurt—and resume your glide.

I also knew how it felt not to get anything at all, especially from a girl. Again, Brown provided words and rhythm suitable to the occasion in what must be the best begging song of all time by a male vocalist, "Please, Please, Please."

I counted the word "please" 25 times—seven times back-to-

back at the start—on a recording that lasts less than three minutes.

Gourevitch dissected Brown's performance: "With each repetition, he invested the monosyllable with a different emotional accent and stress—prayer and pride, impatience and invitation—and although there was ache in his voice, he did not sound like a man pleading so much as commanding what was rightfully his."

This was not a song for doing the James Brown. Our band couldn't play it, and nobody but Brown could sing it. You couldn't whistle or hum it, either. You could, however, put it on a record player to convey your desire for that special someone to stay just a little longer.

Oh, yes. Good God almighty. Honey, please. Don't. Ohhh. Oh, yeah. Lord. I love you so. Pleeceeeeee. Don't go. Pleece-ee-ee-ease. Don't go. Honey, please don't go. Oh. I love you so. Please. Please.

Singer Bonnie Raitt was quoted in the Kennedy Center Honors program as saying about Brown, "You couldn't even list how many people have been influenced by him."

If only she knew how true that was.

Foreign currencies and CNMI's economy

How do changes in value of foreign currencies affect the CNMI's economy?

International currencies, which are free floating, trade like commodities in the international financial markets and their values are determined on buying and selling volumes. However, some countries keep the value of their currencies fixed and only change as they deem necessary or due to international pressure. Examples of free floating currencies are Japanese yen and American dollar while Chinese yuan is fixed in value. Exchange rates are expressed as value of one country's currency in terms of another country's currency. For example, current price or value of Japanese Yen in terms of U.S. dollar is around 110 yen per dollar, similar to how we express the price of a commodity, such as 2 pounds of bananas per dollar.

When the value of a given country's currency rises its products become expensive to other countries to buy and vice versa. For example, U.S. dollar value against yen has decreased from about 120 to 110 yen in about a year. It means that the prices of the Japanese products for us have increased and the prices of our products to Japanese have decreased. In our case, the CNMI's products and services are cheaper to Japanese visitors because the fall in the value of dollar in terms of yen has increased their buying power. This is also a very favorable factor to get more visitors or the visitors who come here to spend more. On the other hand for the Japanese investors who have to send back their investment returns to their parent companies, this factor is unfavorable because it has reduced the yen value of their returns. It has also reduced the yen value of salaries of Japanese business managers who work here.

Now, looking at the Philippines' case whose currency has been consistently falling against the dollar, this has an opposite effect to

By DR. MOHAMMAD ASHRAF



that of Japan. As soon as the Philippine peso falls, it implies an automatic rise in the wages of Filipino workers in the CNMI because they get paid in dollars. In this case it would be in the best interest of Filipino workers to keep their savings in dollars and send home only enough to meet the needs of their families. Unlike Filipino workers, Chinese workers don't have incentive to keep their savings here because the value of their currency is fixed by the government. As you may have noticed in the national news media

“It would be in the best interest of Filipino workers to keep their savings in dollars and send home only enough to meet the needs of their families. Unlike Filipino workers Chinese workers don't have incentive to keep their saving here because the value of their currency is fixed by the government.”

the matter of fixed value of Chinese Yuan (RMB) is under serious debate between the U.S. and China. The U.S. government thinks the Chinese are keeping the value of their currency artificially low, which makes U.S. products expensive in China and Chinese products cheaper in the US. The logic behind this argument is there is over a \$100 billion trade deficit between the U.S. and China. The United States is asking China to set higher rate of its currency or expect retaliatory actions.

In conclusion, I would say our government has no influence whatsoever on the value of any currency and we have to learn to live with the consequences of changing values of currencies particularly in our region. I may also add the news reporting of currency rates would be a valuable service to businesses and workers alike.

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Guam betel nut farmers hurting

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN/PIR)—Farmers in southern reaches of the island said they are taking big losses in their betel nut crops, and both farmers and chewers expressed concern about the implications on the pugua-chewing culture if the island's betel nut trees are wiped out.

In Merizo, betel nut growers shook their heads as they pointed upward at their dead and dying trees already infected by the quickly spreading fungus threatening the island's betel nut.

Shopkeepers and growers said it is already becoming much harder to find the betel nut fruits, pugua in Chamorro, for sale in the south, and said the price per nut has turned up sharply.

Earlier this week, agriculture experts said they had identified the fungus—*Phytophthora meadii*—that began killing Merizo's pugua trees in September as the same fungus that extinguished Saipan's pugua crops eight years ago.

Pugua, a palm tree that yields a hard nut-like fruit, has long been chewed by Pacific islanders. When chewed, the pugua produces a bitter red juice that is known for being a mild stimulant.

Pugua grower Antoine Tajalle, 21, of Merizo said that

different Pacific cultures have different traditions around pugua-chewing. He explained that Guam's Chamorro population traditionally chews the pugua after they ripen and get hard. Other Marianas and Micronesian islanders prefer to chew the nut when it is still young, soft and meaty, he said, and some chew it with ground limestone, tobacco and the leaf of a vine known locally as "pupulu."

In addition to being a culturally beloved practice, pugua also is a good source of income for farmers in the south.

Merizo resident Ben Champaco farms pugua to supplement his retirement income, and said sales often bring him about \$300 a month. He has sold five to six pieces for \$1. However, some of his 600 to 700 pugua plants have begun to die after becoming infected with the fungus.

"It's a primary source of our income, and it's something that we've grown accustomed to help us out with all the bills and everything," Champaco said.

He said he fears he may lose his whole crop, and said if that happens, even if officials manage to control the fungus, it could take about five years to grow a producing crop again.

"Oh boy, it's hitting me fast," he said. "If they don't

come out with a solution, it will kill everything."

Pugua farmer Joe Barcinas said most of his crop is gone already, and only a few of his more than 200 trees are still standing. He said the sudden lack of betel nut in the south has created high demand.

"I tell you, this one young guy, maybe 20, 22 years old, one night he came here about 11 at night and said he would buy betel nut at a dollar apiece. That's how desperate people are," he said.

Former Merizo Mayor Buck Cruz had more than 100 pugua trees in his yard before they began dying in recent weeks. Yesterday, he walked around his yard, pointing out dead, fallen leaves and topless trees. He said he does not chew himself and usually does not sell the nuts, but gives them away to his friends and family who do chew.

"I'm afraid it's going to be a big, big problem," he said. "I have a family friend, 92 years old, she called me up this morning and she said, 'Ay, Buck, what am I going to do without betel nut!'"

Grace Reyes, 28, a cashier at Kathy's Minimart in Merizo, said that the village manamko' have been coming into the store looking for pugua, but each time the store gets a supply, it sells out

immediately. She said she believes it will be hard on the manamko' and the island's culture if the island's pugua is wiped out.

"It's part of their day, it's very important to them," she said. "When they come in, you see how stressed they are if we don't have any. They get kind of depressed, and when we do have it, they get all excited and say, 'Oh good! There's betel nut here.'"

Inarajan resident Ignacia Chargualaf, 55, said she does not chew but her husband and son do. She recalled her grandmother, born in the 19th century, chewing the nut.

"After typhoons, pugua would get scarce, so she (would) chew on the roots of the coconut tree," she said. "Maybe people will do that, or maybe they'll turn to pugua china, the Chinese kind of pugua."

Champaco said in addition to worrying about his own financial future if his crop is destroyed, he is concerned about the cultural implications if pugua is no longer easily available on island.

"These are cultural traditions," he said. "And look at what's going on right now. We don't even know how to speak Chamorro anymore. When things like this are taken away, the culture changes."

NO MONEY

From Page 1

"There's a fund allocated for business when a project is being undertaken. It's called acquisition fund. It's given to businesses to compensate them for the loss while construction is ongoing," he said.

Baldwin said that such form of compensation is a message that the government "wants you to stay in business."

He said that of 32 businesses shops on the Third Street, now known as the Promenade, about 20 would close down.

The mall project construction, which begins early next month, is expected to take nine months.

But the contractor, Maeda Pacific Corp., which submitted a \$3.31 million proposal, expressed confidence that it could finish the project as early as June 2004.

Jordan said that the accu-

sation that the government is being anti-business "is far from the truth."

He said the construction would not interfere with the daily shopping activities on the street as work takes place only from 4am to 12pm every day.

During peak hours, which begin in the afternoon to evening, he said the public has free access to the street's shops, bars and restaurants.

The government aims to equip the street with a lighting system, drinking fountains, covered shelters, and public toilets.

The mall project is the third phase of the approximately \$25-million Garapan revitalization project that aims to transform the downtown Garapan into an attractive and safe focal point for tourist and resident activities, including strolling, outdoor dining, outdoor musical entertainment and festivities.

NEW

From Page 1

Further, he said, that the pedestrian mall will be equipped with lighting and concealed security cameras to increase security for visitors.

He said that part of the revitalization plan is the design and construction of a run-off control for Garapan.

Babauta said the mall project aims to transform the image of Garapan from being a smelly, dirty area into a pleasant tourism destination.

"We want to transform it into a nice place to visit. We've heard tourists complain about the lack of drainage, of prostitution. We'll make our place a first class destination," he said.

The project, which was

awarded to Maeda Pacific Corp., is expected to be completed by June 2004.

Actual construction in the area begins on January 13.

According to the contractor, the drainage repair and improvement would take three months and the concrete walkway work takes another three months.

This is based on a 4am to 12pm daily work schedule for six days a week.

The mall project is the third phase of the approximately \$25-million Garapan revitalization project that aims to develop the district into an attractive and safe focal point for tourist and resident activities.

The government said this project would generate at least \$200 million revenue within the four-year period of the revitalization.

D&Q Saipan donates to Karidat for Christmas

D&Q Saipan donated approximately \$2,000 worth of foods and dry goods to Karidat to help send cheers to the less fortunate during the Christmas season.

The cost of the donations was shared by D&Q and some of its U.S.-based suppliers Kellogg's, Real Fresh Milk, Reynolds, Campbell's and Hormel Foods.

Don Dickerson, one of the owners of D&Q Saipan, said that since they do business in this area, they would like to do something to assist those who are in need.

D&Q's sister company, Dickerson & Quinn, Ltd., made similar donations through a charitable organization on Guam.



Pictured after the presentation are, from left, Jun Miday, Gloria Dettang, Judy Pangelinan and Julie Temaungil, all of Karidat, with Gwen Aguon and Max Kretzers of D&Q Saipan.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CPA

From Page 1

responded immediately to request for them to open all their documents regarding the Sugar Dock project.

Salas said the ports authority received the subpoena on Dec. 17, 2003 and immediately responded to the request. "We opened all our books to them, we provided them with all the needed documents," Salas said in an interview.

The CPA provided the U.S. Attorney's Office with contracts, lease agreements, board meeting minutes, and other documents necessary to the ongoing inquiry.

"They wanted all the records and we responded positively.

CPA is not the only agency that was subpoenaed. There are other individuals and we opened our documents to them. We don't have anything to hide, the project went through the proper channels and procedures," Salas pointed out.

The Sugar Dock project, which was proposed by an Australian firm in early 2002, hopes to provide ferry and cargo services at the Sugar Dock to the island of Tinian.

The Islands Transport Operation, an Australian firm that maintains an on-island company—Allied Maritime Surveyor—submitted its proposal to the CPA, including financial standing. It had entered into a

leasing agreement with the ports authority.

"The cargo service will be able to accommodate even vehicles, there will be roll on and roll off services while passengers can also be ferried to Tinian," stated the proposal that was submitted to the CPA.

In addition to the Australian firm, the CPA also looks at leasing out the Sugar Dock to other firms on island since several watersport and tourist-related activities are being done at the dock without CPA's consent.

Amid the ongoing battle on the proposed dredging of the channel, CPA welcomed the oppositions and sentiments raised by watersports vendors and in-

dividuals, who claimed that dredging would affect marine habitat at the area.

On Monday night, CPA answered questions posed by the community regarding the project. "It was good that there was a public forum like that to give both sides the chance to air their reasons and questions. We welcome that," Salas noted.

Earlier, the administration has advised concerned government agencies to be careful in their review of the proposed Sugar Dock dredging project amid massive protests from the community.

Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente said Gov. Juan N. Babauta are basically awaiting permitting agencies-Division of Environ-

mental Quality, Coastal Resources Management, and Historical Preservation Office-to come up with their own recommendations on the project, which paves the way for a new Saipan-Tinian ferry route.

"I tasked agencies to review this carefully. The governor and I have basically decided to wait and see on what these agencies will be reporting," said Benavente.

He said the administration expects that the agencies look closely at the negative impacts not only to the environment as raised by several residents but also to the whole community.

The project involves the introduction of another ferry service between Saipan and Tinian,

47 recorded in the entire 2001.

The OPA maintains an audit recommendations tracking system to monitor implementation and resolution of audit recommendations.

The number of delinquent recommendations issued by OPA soared 18 percent to 181 in 1999 from the previous year's 153, indicating several government agencies' apparent neglect in taking prompt action to address financial loopholes.

using a new 150-foot vessel that has the capacity to accommodate and transport 35 vehicles and 300 passengers.

Islands Transport Inc., an Australian-based shipping firm, has agreed to provide roll-on/roll-off cargo and passenger ferry services between Saipan and Tinian using the Sugar Dock facility as its Saipan port.

Under the agreement between the private company and the CPA, the shipping firm would conduct the dredging and related improvement activities. The cost to improve the dock will be deducted from the company's annual lease of the facility.

Pete A. reminds NMI students of scholarship deadline

Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio yesterday reminded Northern Marianas students that only about a month remains before the deadline for the 2004-2005 Gates Millennium Scholars award expires on Jan. 16, 2004.

only be determined through the submission of a Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA] to the U.S. Department of Education.)

The goal of GMS is to promote academic excellence and to provide an opportunity for thousands of outstanding students with significant financial need to reach their fullest potential.

GMS selected 1,000 high-achieving students for the 2003-2004 academic year, bringing the total number of students awarded to more than 7,000 since the program's inception.

All completed nomination materials must be postmarked or submitted on-line no later than Jan. 16, 2004. Student nominees, nominators, and recommenders are encouraged to apply online or download nomination materials on the GMS website, <http://www.gmsp.org>. General information, detailed instructions, and current scholar profiles can also be found on the GMS website.

Throughout December and January, GMS volunteers from the Asian Pacific Islander American communities will conduct information sessions and workshops. To find a site near you, visit the Organization of Chinese Americans website, <http://www.ocanatl.org>, click "Partnerships" on the top, click "Gates Millennium Scholars" on the left-hand side, and then click "Information Sessions and Workshops."

Nomination materials and informational brochures may also be requested on the OCA website. Scroll down the main page and click "Request or order 2004-2005 GMS Nomination Materials or Informational Brochures."

The Gates Millennium Scholars, funded by a \$1 billion grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was established in 1999 to provide outstanding Asian Pacific Islander Americans, African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, and Hispanic Americans with an opportunity to complete an undergraduate college education in all discipline areas.

Continuing GMS scholars may request funding for graduate education in the following areas: mathematics, science, engineering, education or library science.

In the 2004-2005 academic year, individuals are eligible to be considered for a GMS award if they:

- are Asian Pacific Islander American, African American, Hispanic American or American Indian/Alaska Native;
- are a citizen/legal permanent resident or national of the United States;
- have a minimum GPA of 3.3 on a 4.00 scale (unweighted) at the time of nomination;
- will be entering a U.S. accredited college or university as full-time, degree-seeking freshmen in the 2004-2005 academic year;
- have demonstrated leadership abilities through participation in community service, extracurricular or other activities;
- and meet the Federal Pell Grant eligibility criteria. (Eligibility for Federal Pell Grant can

microl oh yeah
+red



ELECTRONIC CARD
Filipino workers on Saipan register for an electronic card, a joint-project by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and the Philippines' PCI-Equitable Bank, during a recent visit of OWWA officials from Manila.

EDITH G. ALEJANDRO

BEAUTIFYING GARAPAN
Key government officials and private sector leaders who have diligently worked to finally get the Garapan Revitalization Project going lead the groundbreaking ceremonies last week.

LIBERTY DONES

LUNCH FOR THE ELDERLY
Senior citizens at the Aging Center were treated to an early Christmas treat Tuesday by the members and officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW holds the luncheon treat to promote camaraderie and patriotism in the community.

EDITH G. ALEJANDRO



PARTY FOR CHRIST
Commonwealth Health Center staff members imbibe the holiday spirit as they gather for the government hospital's annual Christmas party.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

tribune subs



SINGING MANAMKOS
Senior citizens at the Aging Center serenade Gov. Juan N. Babauta, Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente and Community & Cultural Affairs Secretary Juan L. Babauta with Christmas carols during a recent holiday treat sponsored by the Governor's Office.

LIBERTY DONES



HEAR OUR PLEA
Community members trooped to the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe to express their opposition to the proposed Sugar Dock dredging, citing environmental, historical, and sentimental concerns.

EDITH G. ALEJANDRO



A STEP AHEAD
The first batch of Northern Marianas College students to graduate on a fall semester was a picture of pride during their graduation Saturday.

LIBERTY DONES



RELAX LIKE A KING
Massage attendant Ma. Cristina Villamor shows the way to the rooms of Tropical Blend Spa, the services of which and the tropical ambiance combine for total relaxation that's fit for a king.

JOHN RAVELO

sporting
goods

JSTA reports drop in crimes vs tourists

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Japan Saipan Travel Association disclosed that the Department of Public Safety's intensified operations against individuals victimizing tourists resulted in significant reduction in reported crimes against CNMI visitors.

This, as JSTA officials lauded DPS' prompt action on calls to implement additional measures to protect tourists against criminal elements, especially those preying on those visiting the islands' tourist spots.

The association applauded the

police department for its immediate response and decisiveness to put an end to the crimes perpetrated against visitors.

"The Japan Saipan Travel Association expresses its utmost appreciation for the quick and decisive response by the police department, which was strongly supported by Gov. Juan N. Babauta," JSTA said in a media statement.

JSTA, a local association established in 1992 for the purpose of promoting tourism in the CNMI, has facilitated several invitations to Japanese tourists to help the CNMI's tourism industry.

Due to the rising number of

crimes against tourists in recent years, JSTA had expressed concerns about the safety of foreign visitors on the islands. Tourism officials said that with the involvement of the DPS and the intensified campaign against criminal elements, Northern Marianas visitors are more safe and secured.

"With DPS involvement, we have been very fortunate and lucky and we have not received complaints of car break-in or tourist being victimized," JSTA added.

As a result, JSTA is confident that it would bring additional tourists into the Northern Marianas.

"This is good for us, and most

especially the CNMI, as we all depend on our visitors to bring back positive image and great expectation about the CNMI. They are our agents and they close the link to other visitors who have not visited the CNMI yet. They are our honorary ambassadors," JSTA noted.

Recently, the DPS and the NMI Crime Stoppers had given its campaign on crimes against tourists more teeth in order to put a stop to the increasing number of complaints lodged by visiting foreigners who had fallen prey to criminal elements while touring several known spots on the island.

Crime Stoppers coordinator Sgt. Tom Blas, Jr. said the anti-crime group has unveiled its newest campaign in reducing crimes against tourists by offering cash rewards for information leading to an arrest.

Blas said the group offers \$500 cash to individuals who would help authorities arrest individuals responsible for the continued burglary and theft incidents at different tourist spots in the Commonwealth.

He noted that the increasing number of car break-ins at beach locations frequented by tourists and the increasing number of purse snatching in tour-

ist areas will certainly have an adverse impact on the CNMI's tourism industry.

He explained that the Crime Stoppers is offering to pay a minimum of \$500 cash rewards for information leading to an arrest of anyone responsible for a crime committed against tourists. The reward would go closer to or reach \$1,000 if more than one case is solved or if multiple suspects are arrested.

"Do your part and be part of the solution rather than being part of the problem, call Crime Stoppers at 234-7272. All calls will remain anonymous," Blas urged the public.

Road safety checkpoints set

The Department of Public Safety's Traffic Section will be conducting sobriety checkpoints on Dec. 27 and 28.

The first setup will be on Beach Road Chalan Laulau by Chars Store. This target will be in operation at approximately 8pm and will be terminated at about 9:15pm on Dec. 27.

The second setup will be on 16 Highway Dandan by the Joeten Supermarket. This target will be in operation from 12:30am and will be terminated around 1:45am on Dec. 28.

Each checkpoint will last at least one hour and 15 minutes at each location. This activity is part of the Department of Pub-

lic Safety's efforts to deter and detect and ensure that all vehicle occupants are protected.

In addition, the traffic officers will also be conducting highway criminal interdictions, saturation patrols, aggressive driver interdiction, and laser activities.

For more information, contact Sgt. Joseph Flores at 664-9084-6.



MOBIL DONATES TO LIONS CLUB
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Mobil's Commercial Territory Manager Jojo Dadivas, right, hands out the \$500-check donation to Saipan Fil-Am Lions Club president Danilo Robles, second right. The donation was used for Lions Club's Christmas Gift-Giving Project for children with disabilities. Also in photo are Mobil's North Complex manager Ren Mabesa, left, and Michael Guirey of Lions Club.

Gift giving for special kids today

Parents of Public School System's Special Education Program are informed that Tan Holdings Corporation is hosting the first annual gift-giving event for Special Education children on Friday, December 26, at 10am at the Dai-Ichi Hotel main lobby. Santa Claus will also be there. Parents are invited to bring their children. Refreshments will be provided.



dial rent

PUBLIC NOTICE
December 12th, 13th, 14th, 2003

Acute Violations of CNMI Drinking Water Regulations

Drinking Water Violation: Fecal Coliform-*E. Coli*

Areas Between North San Vicente and Papago

(SAIPAN, December 11th, 2003)—Public Water Systems are operated by the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation. The public utility is in violation of the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations in the northern most point of San Vicente, exiting to Papago. All residents in the water regions / village(s) listed are immediately advised of an acute water violation that indicates the presence of the bacteria: ***E. Coli***, that is in the family of fecal coliforms.

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation collects water samples according to a Monitoring Plan, approved by the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Routine water samples were collected on December 9th and 10th. An independent laboratory, Quality Water, incubated and analyzed the samples. At 3:00 p.m. December 10th, the Utility was notified of possible violations and advised to repeat water collection samples from within the distribution system’s Monitoring Plan that are located in a broader scope, called, “up-stream” and “downstream” sampling. Technicians can then determine the extent, scope, or size of the contamination, as noted in the chart below.

Quality Water verifies, on December 11th, that the CUC distribution system remains in violation in northern San Vicente with the presence of fecal coliforms. The utility is required to notify the public and the Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) of the violation of the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations.

Health Effects

The presence of **Fecal Coliforms** or *E. coli* bacteria is a serious health concern. These bacteria are not generally harmful themselves, but their presence in drinking water is usually associated with animal or human wastes, indicating a problem either with treatment (such as power outages stopping chlorine treatment systems) or problems within the public water transmission pipelines (such as a broken pipe that allows contaminated runoff from homesteads, commercial lots, ranches, and polluted soils to enter into the system). The water may be contaminated with organisms that can cause disease. Short-term health effects may include: diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or possibly jaundice, and associated fatigue. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, and people with severely compromised immune systems. These symptoms, however, are not only associated with drinking water; they may also be caused by a number of other factors, other than the water. To reduce adverse health effects, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets drinking water standards. Under the standards, all drinking water must be free of any ***E. coli*** or Fecal Coliforms.

Do You Have A Catchment Tank?

If people collect, store, keep or mix CUC water and rainwater in catchment tanks, or if you store water for several days, we strongly urge customers to first boil water before use. (Bring the water to a rapid boil for about five minutes; OR alternately, household bleach (Clorox™ or Purex™) may be added: 5 drops per gallon or 2 teaspoons per/one hundred (100) gallons of water. Mix the bleach and water and let it stand for 30 minutes before using the water. Otherwise, there are no actions or alternatives necessary.

Corrective Actions Taken

Chlorine Gas is injected into the water. The gas kills harmful bacteria and is a common treatment method. On Thursday, December 11th, 2003, the Lab crews will again collect repeat samples from the contaminated zone and the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation Water Chlorination Teams continue to inject chlorine gas at Treatment Stations. The chlorine is fed into the entire distribution systems—at all 13 Saipan water zones. Water is treated primarily at the reservoirs and tanks; and where no tanks are yet built, the wells are first grouped together for treatment prior to water distribution. CUC operates a total of 132 water wells and three springs. has 42 Treatment Stations that are monitored for compliance under the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations, enforced by the DEQ.

Testing Date(s)	Monitoring Plan Sample Site	Villages & Locations of Violation
December 9-11 th	Rita Guerrero Test Site	Between north San Vicente and Papago
December 10 th :	Anthony Guerrero Test Site	Same Family Property-north San Vicente

For more information about water operations, customers may contact CUC Water Manager Jess Castro 235-7025; or CUC Special Advisor Pamela A. Mathis at 235-7037. Questions that relate to the CNMI Drinking Water Regulations can be addressed to DEQ, at Joe Kaipat, at 664-8500.



Safety Products Micronesia, Inc. kicks off local operations during its grand opening today at its Middle Road, Gualo Rai office. From left are Danny Badidles, Kits Marasigan, Desiree Chargualaf and Allen Reyes.

JOHN RAVELO

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Safety is new company's top concern

The company also has absorbents, which are used to absorb petroleum products in cases of spillage.

Chargualaf said all products the company carries are compliant with standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the American National Standards Institute.

On Guam, she said the business has boomed even as Supertyphoon Pongsona devastated the island's economy. The post-typhoon construction boom has had a positive effect on its business.

Chargualaf said, however, "Safety is not just for construction boom. Every company has to have some type of safety."

Safety Products' affiliate company, Pacific Rainbow Paint Supply, has been operating on Saipan for about a year now, exclusively distributing the internationally renowned Sherwin Williams paint products. The Saipan outlet of Rainbow followed that of Guam, which began operations in 1993.

Today, Safety Products invites the public to witness its Gualo Rai outlet's grand opening day. "I'd like every-body to come down and visit us," Chargualaf said.

After a year of operating his Pacific Rainbow Paint Supply on Saipan, trader Manu Melwani expands his local business venture by officially opening the Safety Products Micronesia, Inc. today.

The new company joins Pacific Rainbow in its Middle Road, Gualo Rai office, adjacent to the former location of The Field's Sports Bar and Grill.

"There aren't very many [safety product] companies around. We wanted to give it a try here," said Desiree Chargualaf, Safety Products' purchasing manager. The company is an affiliate of Guam's Safety 1st Systems, which began operations in 1989.

Safety Products carries the popular Leatherman brand in tools. These products have 20-year warranty, Chargualaf said. The store also sells Pelican flashlights with lifetime warranty.

On display at the Saipan outlet are fire extinguishers, safety shoes, ring buoys, hard hats, safety gloves and glasses, raincoats, suits, chemical-resistant boots, and first aid kits, among other products.

CDA closes \$40-M bond

The Commonwealth Development Authority has successfully issued the \$40-million General Obligation bonds.

Authorized by Public Law 13-17, as amended, the bonds will constitute debt of the CNMI issued pursuant to the Commonwealth Constitution, the GO bond law, the Bond Act, and other applicable laws.

The \$40-million general obligation bonds, Series 2003A received a rating of Ba3 from Moody's Investors Services and B+ from Standard & Poors on Nov. 26, 2003.

Maturing on October 1, 2033 with an interest rate of 6.750 percent, the bonds were sold to Lehman Bros.—the under-writers—on December 4, 2003.

At the office of Watanabe Ing, Kawashima & Komeiji LLP, Honolulu, Hawaii, CDA board chairman Sixto K. Igisomar, executive director MaryLou S. Ada, legal counsel Vicente T. Salas; Gov. Juan N. Babauta, consultant Rex I.

Palacios, Marianas Public Lands Authority commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Finance Robert Schrack, and legal counsel Alan Lane closed the \$40-million general obligation bonds.

Immediately after the closing, Lehman Bros. will deliver to bond trustee Bank of Guam—via federal funds wire transfer—the \$40-million GO Bond proceeds less the cost of issuance (\$1.5 million), to be deposited to the CNMI account in BoG.

Monies will be available for disbursement by MPLA after Monday, Dec. 15, 2003.

Proceeds of the \$40-million general obligation bond issue will be issued to pay for certain parcels and other private real property taken by the government for public roads, highways, as well as to fund the construction of the Adult Correctional Facility as provided in the Bond Act.

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Some still confident about Boeing deal

By MATTHEW DALY
AP WRITER

Acknowledging a setback from the Pentagon’s decision to postpone acquiring 100 refueling tankers from the Boeing Co., congressional supporters say they are confident the deal ultimately will go forward.

“It’s not dead. It’s just delayed,” said Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Kan.

Tiahrt and other lawmakers pledged to keep fighting for the deal, which has been planned for more than two years and is expected to save thousands of jobs in several states.

Congress last month approved a plan to lease 20 planes and buy an additional 80. But this week Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz announced “a pause” so the Pentagon’s internal auditor can examine whether two Boeing executives improperly affected contract negotiations for the planes.

Wolfowitz did not give a timetable, but said in a letter to Congress that no action on the contract would be taken until the investigation is complete.

“The important word in the Wolfowitz letter is pause,” said Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., a key supporter of the tanker deal. He said it was appropriate to examine the conduct of former Boeing executives Mike Sears and Darleen Druyun.

“It’s also appropriate for those who support this to remind the administration that we need new tankers and that we should sign this contract as soon as possible,” Dicks said.

Supporters of the deal argue that the ethics scandal does not change the need to replace the current 40-year-old fleet with new tankers for refueling aircraft in midair.

SEC tentatively adopts fund trade curbs

Federal regulators on Wednesday proposed to close a loophole that allows illegal after-hours trading in mutual funds, in a bid to help restore investor confidence in funds that has been shaken by a spreading scandal.

The Securities and Exchange Commission voted 5-0 to tentatively adopt and open to public comment a new trading rule, the first step in its planned overhaul of how the \$7 trillion fund industry operates.

To stem illegal late trading, the rule would impose a “hard cutoff” of 4 p.m. Eastern time for pricing of fund shares.

The SEC is acting as problems spread through the mutual fund and brokerage industries, more big-name companies are cited for allowing special trading deals that disadvantage ordinary investors and a money stampede continues out of implicated funds. Some 95 million Americans—half of all households—invest in mutual funds.

The SEC move comes two weeks after the House overwhelmingly passed legislation requiring mutual fund companies to disclose more information to investors about fees and operations, and making directors on fund company boards more independent from fund managers.

Treasury Secretary John Snow said the independent agency’s reform plan marks “important progress in strengthening the governance and transparency of mutual funds, in preserving the critical role that these funds play in our financial system and in protecting investors.” (AP)

Boeing’s chairman and chief executive, Phil Condit, resigned Monday, one week after the company fired Sears, its chief financial officer, and Druyun, a Boeing vice president and former high-ranking Air Force official. A Boeing investigation found that Sears approached Druyun about joining the company while Druyun was overseeing Boeing contracts for the Air Force.

President Bush last week signed a \$401 billion defense bill authorizing the plan to lease and buy the tankers, but no final contract has been signed. The planes would be made at Boeing’s plant in Everett, Wash., and modified for military use in Wichita, Kan.

Wal-Mart to stop taking debit MasterCard

By CHUCK BARTELS
AP WRITER

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. will stop accepting signature debit cards issued by MasterCard starting in February, the first major retailer to take such action since a lawsuit settlement freed merchants to pick which credit and debit card services they use.

Wal-Mart, the world’s biggest retailer, said Wednesday that MasterCard’s fees for the signature debit cards are too high. It will continue to accept Visa’s signature debit cards.

MasterCard said the Wal-

Mart decision “confirms what was always the biggest threat of the merchant lawsuit—that it would take choice about how to pay for goods and services away from consumers and place it firmly in the grip of big retailers.”

The company added: “It is surprising in today’s environment for any merchant to make a conscious decision that will result in dissatisfied customers and lost sales.”

“Visa believes that the vast majority of merchants will continue to accept the Visa check card because of the significant value that it provides to them,”

Visa USA vice president Daniel Tarman said.

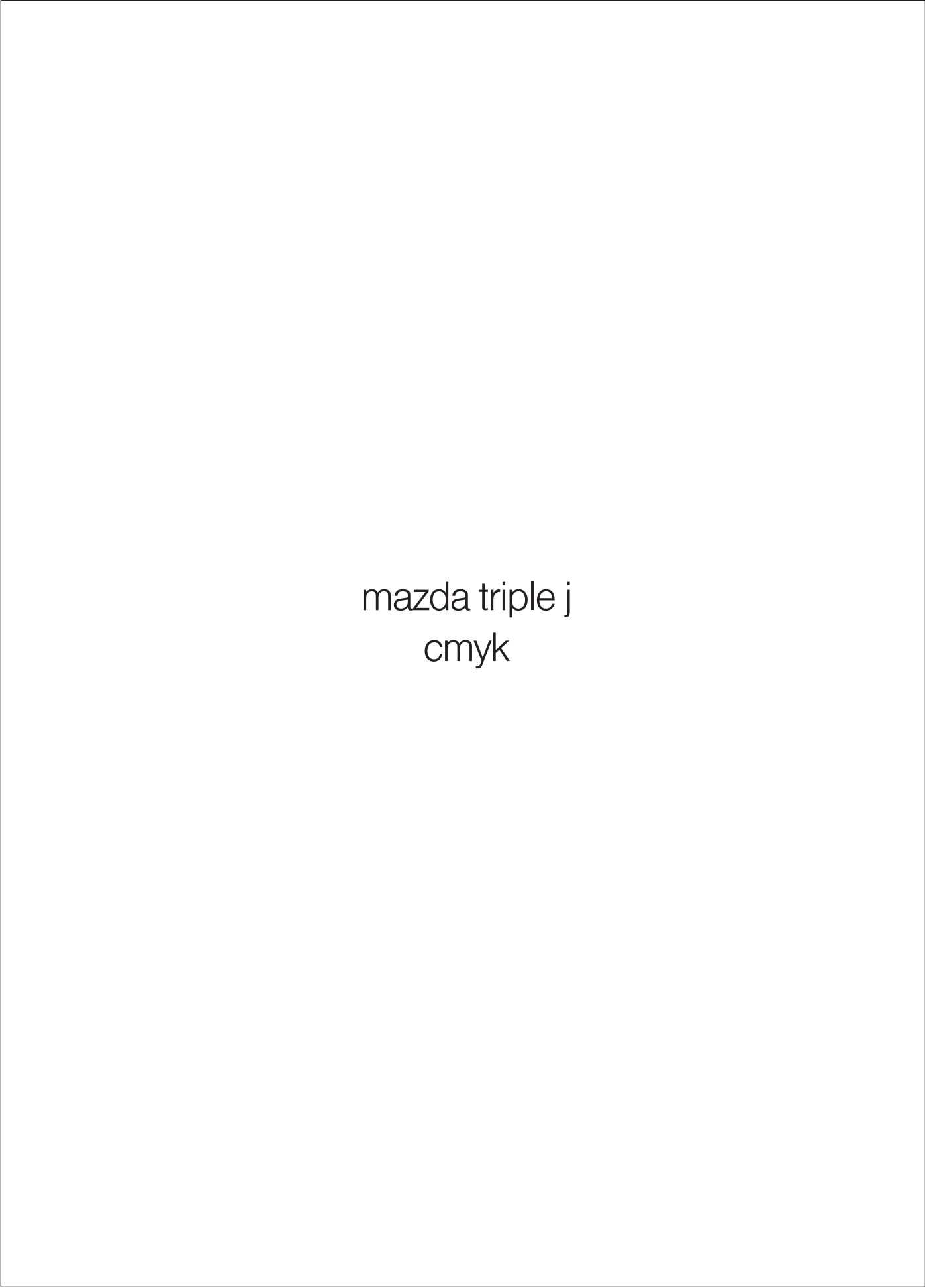
When the change goes into effect Feb. 1, Wal-Mart doesn’t expect many customers to be stopped dead at the cash register.

Wal-Mart spokeswoman Melissa Berryhill said Wednesday that fewer than 1 percent of Wal-Mart transactions are under MasterCard signature debit cards, and more than 90 percent of the cards carry a personal identification number that can be used instead of a signature.

Wal-Mart will continue to accept MasterCard debit cards if people key in their PIN numbers.



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Nasdaq flirts with 2,000 as stocks jump

By HOPE YEN
AP BUSINESS WRITER

The Nasdaq composite index flirted with 2,000 for the first time in nearly two years Wednesday and the Dow Jones industrials approached the 10,000 level as investors eagerly picked up stocks following a strong productivity report but then grew cautious.

The high-tech dominated Nasdaq reached 2,000 and the

Dow came within 58 points of 10,000 in the early afternoon before both indexes retreated and closed mixed. Analysts said investors were optimistic but choosing to take their time in sending stocks significantly higher.

“Folks are really starting to believe in the sustainability of the economic recovery,” said Richard J. Nash, chief market strategist at Victory Capital Management. “The productivity

numbers were just spectacular” and should bring “another good surge in corporate profits.”

The Nasdaq rose as high as 2,000.92 before falling back to close at 1,960.25, down 19.82, or 1 percent. The index, which suffered the worst losses during the bear market of the past few years, had not traded above 2,000 since Jan. 15, 2002.

The Dow, meanwhile, closed up 19.78, or 0.2 percent, at 9,873.42. Earlier in the day, the



blue chip average rose as much as 88 points to reach 9,942.01. The last time the Dow traded above 10,000 was May 31, 2002.

The Standard & Poor’s 500 index fell 1.89, or 0.2 percent, to 1,064.73.

The Nasdaq’s return to 2,000 was a significant step in the stock market’s recovery from the heavy losses that followed the dot-com bust, recession and corporate ethics scandals of recent years. But the index still remains well below its record close of 5,048.62, reached March 10, 2000.

Wednesday’s gains followed a Labor Department report that U.S. productivity shot up at a 9.4 percent annual rate in the third quarter. It was the best reading in 20 years and better than economists’ forecasts as well as the 8.1 percent rate initially estimated by the department a month ago.

A report on U.S. service sector growth was weaker than expected, however. The Institute for Supply Management said its index of business activity in the non-manufacturing sector stood at 60.1 in November, compared to 64.7 in October, according to Dow Jones Newswires. It was the slowest rate of growth since May; it also fell below analysts’ estimates of 64.5.

Stocks have risen in recent days, partly on investor optimism for a stronger economy. December also is typically strong for stocks as investors put year-end bonuses and dividends to work, although some analysts wonder if shares have risen much too far, too fast.

Declining issues outnumbered advancers 5 to 4 on the New York Stock Exchange. Consolidated volume was moderate at 1.85 billion shares, the same amount traded Tuesday.

The Russell 2000 index, a barometer of smaller company stocks, fell 8.41, or 1.5 percent, to 545.19.

Overseas, Japan’s Nikkei stock average finished 0.8 percent lower. In Europe, Britain’s FTSE 100 increased 0.3 percent, France’s CAC-40 advanced 0.9 percent, and Germany’s DAX index gained 1.7 percent.

FCC okay with proposed purchase of News Corp.

By JONATHAN D. SALANT
AP WRITER

News Corp.’s proposed takeover of DirecTV, the nation’s largest satellite television provider, should be approved by the Federal Communications Commission with certain conditions, the FCC’s staff recommended after studying the deal.

An FCC official, speaking on condition of anonymity Wednesday, said the staff backed the \$6.6 billion deal if DirecTV more quickly offers local over-the-air broadcast channels to its customers, and if an arbitration mechanism is set up to handle disputes between News Corp.’s Fox broadcasting arm and cable television companies.

The arbitration is designed to alleviate concerns Fox will pull its network programming off cable systems to encourage viewers to subscribe to DirecTV, the official said. Among that programming is the National Football League and major league baseball.

In May 2002, a dispute over how much Time Warner should pay for the Walt Disney Co.’s cable channels led to Disney’s ABC network being removed from Time Warner cable systems in New York and six other cit-

ies. In January, some 400,000 Cox Communications customers in the Washington, D.C., area, Cleveland, Dallas and Houston lost the Fox network for a week in a dispute over whether the cable company should also carry two Fox cable channels.

The staff recommendation now goes to the five-member FCC, which will make a final decision, likely this month.

Under the deal announced in April, News Corp. would acquire 34 percent of DirecTV parent Hughes Electronics, a subsidiary of General Motors Corp. The deal would give News Corp. the largest block of shares in Hughes and controlling interest in DirecTV, which has more than 11 million subscribers.

Some consumer groups have opposed the deal, as have several cable companies, arguing the media consolidation is anti-competitive and threatens to further drive up the price of pay television.

News Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch has said the acquisition would not harm competition or limit consumer choices. He said the merger will improve DirecTV, providing consumers with more local TV stations and better high-speed Internet access.

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Nation

Flu among young pregnant women rises

By LIZ AUSTIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DALLAS (AP)—Flu cases among young pregnant women surged at a large public hospital, calling attention to yet another group at serious risk of the flu.

About 80 expectant mothers have been diagnosed with the flu since early October, said Dr. Jeanne Sheffield, a maternal and fetal medicine specialist at Parkland Health and Hospital System. More than 60 were admitted, with one treated in the

intensive care unit, she said.

Pregnancy weakens a woman's immune system, making her more vulnerable to the virus. Only two of the women had the flu shot, and they had it just before they became ill, so they were not protected.

But Sheffield said it is rare to see so many pregnant women get sick. Most were in their teens and early 20s; all recovered and are out of the hospital.

"Maybe we may have admitted five or 10 a year in the past," Sheffield said. "This is much

different than normal."

It isn't clear why Parkland had so many flu cases among pregnant women. Some health officials speculate that it's because Parkland—with 15,000 births annually among the leading hospitals for deliveries—is a large public hospital that treats many uninsured people. Its patients are less likely to see a doctor regularly or early in an illness, Sheffield said.

A Texas Department of Health survey found no other serious outbreaks among preg-

nant women in the state, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has not heard of any similar outbreaks in the nation.

Sheffield believes Parkland also is being more aggressive about testing for the flu than other hospitals. Testing was done on all pregnant women who showed flu symptoms after one sick woman with an unusually high heart rate was diagnosed with it in October.

"Suddenly all of us were very aware that influenza was

around, and it was affecting our pregnant women," she said. "We jumped on it very, very quickly."

Among the states with major flu outbreaks, Texas was the first where the virus was widespread. That may explain why Dallas is the first to report such a high number of ill pregnant women, said Dr. Tim Uyeki, a CDC epidemiologist.

"Any type of infection can lead to pre-term labor," Sheffield said, adding that the flu can progress to more dangerous infections such as pneumonia or

meningitis.

While flu shots are encouraged for everyone, women in their second and third trimesters are among those at high risk, along with women at any stage of pregnancy who are HIV-positive.

Parkland began a vaccination campaign among pregnant women when doctors noticed the upswing in cases, Sheffield said, and free shots are offered to all pregnant women treated at the hospital or any of its community clinics.

Ridge's immigration remarks draw fire

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge's expression of support for giving legal status to immigrants drew congressional criticism Wednesday but heartened advocates.

At a town hall meeting in Miami, Ridge said the country needs to "come to grips" with an estimated 8 million to 12 million illegal immigrants and "determine how you can legalize their presence." He also said during a visit to Florida on Tuesday that the immigrants should not be rewarded citizenship.

Asa Hutchinson, under-secretary for border and transportation security, said Wednesday in Miami that Ridge's comments simply reflected the debate in Congress on immigration.

"Secretary Ridge addressed it very honestly yesterday, engaged in that debate, but clearly this administration has not taken a firm policy position on that and the debate continues," Hutchinson said.

But Rep. J.D. Hayworth, R-Ariz., said it was "inconceivable to me that Secretary Ridge is speaking for the Bush administration when he unilaterally and offhandedly suggests such a radical policy reversal that is guaranteed to encounter strong

opposition in Congress."

The attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, slowed talks about whether to legalize millions of illegal immigrants in the country.

Ridge's words excited immigration advocates and one of Hayworth's House colleague, Rep. Jeff Flake, who is sponsoring legislation that would give legal residency to illegal immigrants through work.

"Those who are working here illegally need to be here under a legal framework. Secretary Ridge also understands that this needs to be coupled with serious workplace enforcement," said Flake, R-Ariz.

Judy Golub, senior policy and outreach director for American Immigration Lawyers Association, said she thought it was the first time that a top administration official had made "such a clear articulation of the fact that these folks are not threats and deserve some form of legal status."

Cecilia Munoz, vice president of policy for National Council of La Raza, said Ridge's comments broke two years of silence by the administration on the legalization issue. (AP)

Key parts of campaign finance law upheld

WASHINGTON (AP)—A divided Supreme Court upheld the broadest restrictions on campaign donations in nearly 30 years Wednesday, ruling the nation is better off with limits on the financial influence of deep-pocket donors even if money never can be divorced from politics.

Rooting out corruption, or even the appearance of it, justifies limitations on the free speech and free spending of contributors, candidates and political parties, the court said in a 5-4 decision.

"We are under no illusion that (the law) will be the last congres-

sional statement on the matter," Justices John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor wrote for the majority. "Money, like water, will always find an outlet. What problems will arise, and how Congress will respond, are concerns for another day."

Indeed, that already has happened, with groups being formed to collect donations and spend money in ways not covered by the law.

Dissenting were Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony M. Kennedy and Clarence Thomas.

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Divers search for missing cargo crew

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—Divers searched for three missing crew members of a Dutch cargo ship Wednesday after the ship turned on its side in the frigid Hudson River, sending eight others overboard, officials said.

The ship turned partly on its side Tuesday in the partially frozen river, and eight members of the 18-person crew went overboard and were pulled from the river. Two crew members were hospitalized for hypothermia, and seven others were rescued from the ship, some by helicopter.

Divers returned Wednesday to search for the missing crew members, who were believed to be in the ship's hull based on interviews with other crew members.

No sound had been heard from within the ship, however, and Detective James Miller said it was also possible they were in the river. Water temperatures were in the low 30s Wednesday morning.

"Obviously our first thoughts—everybody's first thoughts—are with the three people still missing. We don't know where they are," Gov. George Pataki said. But he added that the search must "proceed prudently" so that divers are not put at risk.

The ship had loaded 661 tons of steel turbines bound for Italy and Romania. Officials at first said the load apparently shifted. But on Wednesday, Coast Guard Commander John Cameron said the ship was at only 20 percent of its capacity, and its ballast should have kept it stable.

He said the investigation will now



Rescuers launch a boat on the Hudson River near the capsized Dutch cargo ship Stellamare to search for three missing crew members at the Port of Albany in Albany, N.Y. Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2003.

focus on whether the ballast was properly managed. Crew members also will be interviewed about other possible causes, he said.

Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings said rescuers monitored the situation overnight using sound equipment, but did not hear anything coming from inside the hull that warranted sending divers

into the vessel. The mayor said a major concern in sending divers is the ship's stability.

The 289-foot ship remained on its side, tethered to the dock at a sharp angle.

The ship's owner, Jumbo Shipping Co., hired salvage divers who used a small boat Wednesday morning to see

if the ship was stable.

The ship is a Stellamare, part of a fleet of 11 heavy-lift vessels ships belonging to Netherlands-based Jumbo Shipping. Jumbo officials said the crew was Russian.

One crew member listed in critical condition was upgraded to serious at a hospital Tuesday night. Another was in fair condition.

Mom, boyfriend charged with drowning kids

CLINTON, Ill. (AP)—A woman and her boyfriend were charged with first-degree murder Wednesday in the deaths of her three children, who drowned when their car plunged into a lake in September in what initially looked like a tragic accident.

Sheriff Roger Massey would not say how the car went down a boat ramp into Clinton Lake, killing the 6-year-old, 3-year-old and toddler inside.

Massey said authorities know what the motive was, but he would not provide details other than to say it did not involve life-insurance money.

Maurice Lagrone Jr., 28, and Amanda Hamm, 27, were each charged with three counts of first-degree murder for each death, Massey said. They were arrested separately Tuesday and were being held on \$5 million bail.

Deputies arrived at the lake in central Illinois on Sept. 2 within five minutes of receiving a 911 call from Hamm saying her children were in the water. The two suspects were on the lakeshore when rescuers arrived and Hamm was crying hysterically, according to one eyewitness.

Neither the couple nor investigators have ever offered a public explanation for why the couple was at the lake. Authorities have said the suspects were not launching or removing a boat, and it was not clear if they were in the car when it went in the water. The couple never spoke to reporters or returned messages for comment.

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Flu outbreak worst in 30 years in West

By DANIEL Q. HANEY
AP MEDICAL EDITOR

The current flu outbreak is the worst for young U.S. children in years, several experts say, perhaps worse in Western states than the Hong Kong flu of 1968-69.

A government epidemiologist and other disease doctors predict flu deaths among babies and toddlers will exceed the estimated 92 who die in an average flu year.

“We would expect that number would be higher in a season like this. It would be more than 92,” said Dr. William Thompson of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “The question is how high. We can’t

estimate that from our data.”

Even so, flu deaths among children are still rare. An average of 8,400 normally healthy children between 6 months and 24 months are hospitalized with the flu each year. The virus and its complications are the sixth-leading killer of children age 4 and under.

With the flu now widespread across half the country, large hospitals have already admitted hundreds of young patients, including a few critically ill in intensive care. Nearly all eventually get better, but the deaths have been particularly worrisome.

“What I am hearing anecdotally is this is a very, very bad

season for children,” said Dr. Walt Orenstein, director of the National Immunization Program at the CDC.

So far, the CDC has learned of about three dozen deaths in children and teenagers. It is unclear how that figure compares to previous years because the agency doesn’t keep track of flu cases.

For the first season in four winters, the dominant flu strain is a so-called H3N2 virus, which is the most dangerous of the three main varieties of the bug. For that reason alone, experts say, the number of pediatric deaths will be higher than average.

The CDC estimates that in an

average year, about 36,000 people—including 92 children under age 4—die of the flu. However, the totals vary from year to year, depending on the strain that is circulating. Through the 1990s, the annual tally has ranged from 17,000 to 65,000. In a year when the more benign B-strain of flu dominates, just 24 deaths under age 4 are expected.

Flu can be a serious disease for the young because they have not built up much natural defense against the virus. Most older children and adults can fight off severe illness, even if they get sick, because previous infections have strengthened their immune systems.

This year may be especially

bad because many young children have never encountered an H3N2 virus. Making matters worse, this season’s virus is genetically different from the one that circulated in the late 1990s, so older children who had the flu then may not have very strong immunity.

Flu is most dangerous for youngsters who already have heart and lung problems, such as

asthma, cardiac birth defects and lung damage resulting from prematurity.

However, doctors said they are especially concerned by reports of flu deaths among children who are otherwise healthy. In Colorado, where the first child flu deaths appeared, state officials said that at least four of the 11 young flu fatalities had no underlying diseases.

Ex-governor indicted on corruption charges

CHICAGO (AP)—Former Gov. George Ryan, who gained a worldwide reputation as a critic of the death penalty, was indicted Wednesday on charges of taking payoffs in a corruption scandal that shadowed his entire four years in office and cut short his political career.

Prosecutors said the 69-year-old Republican and his family took cash, gifts, vacations and other favors to steer state business to friends and associates while he was governor and, before that, Illinois secretary of state.

“The charged conduct by former Gov. Ryan reflects a disturbing violation of trust,” U.S. Attorney Patrick J. Fitzgerald said. “Ryan is charged with betraying the citizens of Illinois for over a decade on state business, both large and small.”

Ryan did not immediately return a call for comment and no one answered the door at his home in Kankakee. Timothy Rooney, a partner of Ryan defense attorney Dan K. Webb, said a statement would be released later.

Ryan, who served as secretary of state from 1991 to 1999 and governor from 1999 to last January, has said he knew there was a culture of corruption in the secretary of state’s office but was unaware of the specifics.

He becomes the third Illinois governor indicted in the past 40 years.

Outside Illinois, Ryan is best known as an ardent critic of the way capital punishment is carried out. He declared a moratorium on executions in Illinois after it was discovered that 13 wrongfully convicted men had been sent to death row.

Last January, just before leaving office, he cleared out Illinois’ death row, pardoning four condemned prisoners and commuting the death sentences of 167 others to life in prison.

The scandal was a factor in his 2001 decision not to seek a second term, and his unpopularity was considered a major reason GOP candidates were routed statewide in the 2002 elections.

The five-year federal investigation initially focused on the selling of driver’s licenses for bribes at the secretary of state’s office, which oversees the motor vehicle agency. But the investigation was soon expanded to a range of corruption under Ryan, a glad-handing, baby-kissing politician from the old school.



Ryan

Elderly man may be charged in fatal crash

SANTAMONICA, Calif. (AP)—Police will ask the district attorney to file manslaughter charges against an 87-year-old man whose car roared through a farmer’s market in this beachfront city, killing 10 people and injuring 63.

The July 16 crash was the result of unsafe speed and other violations by Russell Weller, police Chief James T. Butts told reporters outside police headquarters Wednesday.

“We’re asking consideration of the district attorney’s office in seeking to file the charge of manslaughter,” Butts said.

Los Angeles County District Attorney Steve Cooley said his office has received the police department’s more than 900-page report and will make a decision after reviewing it. An assistant prosecutor said he ex-

pected a decision to be made in a few weeks.

“The DA’s office had prosecutors present at the crime scene within the first few hours and has been reviewing reports and interviewing hundreds of witnesses since then,” Cooley said in a statement issued shortly before the news conference.

Weller’s attorney said his client shouldn’t face charges.

“We’re anxious to see the report because we’ve conducted our own extensive investigation and concluded this was a tragic, terrible accident,” attorney Jim Bianco said. “There was no intent to hurt anyone, no negligence and no crime.”

He added that Weller was heartbroken by what happened: “He suffers every minute of every day knowing that he was driving that car.”

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WTC tower design includes windmills

NEW YORK (AP)—Instead of the initially proposed “gardens in the sky,” the 1,776-foot Freedom Tower at the World Trade Center site will be topped by environmentally friendly windmills, people familiar with the latest plans for the building said Wednesday.

The building will have 70 floors of office space topped by broadcast antennas, wind turbines and cables resembling a suspension bridge.

The use of windmills in a tall building “is innovative and different and new and is something that will have to be designed carefully,” said Ashok Gupta, director of the air and energy program at the Natural Resources Defense Council, who has been advising redevelopment officials on environmental issues.

Neill Coleman, a spokesman

for the New York State League of Conservation Voters, said, “We’re very excited about the idea of a renewable energy component to the design.”

Detailed plans for the tower, the first that will go up at the trade center site, will be released next week by Gov. George Pataki.

The design is a collaboration between Daniel Libeskind, who submitted the winning plan for redevelopment, and David Childs, the chief architect for leaseholder Larry Silverstein.

The New York Times reported Wednesday that the design would bear little resemblance to Libeskind’s original, asymmetrical structure. A source familiar with the plans, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press that the twisting, tapered building would still evoke the Statue

of Liberty across the harbor, as Libeskind envisioned.

When Libeskind presented his site plan one year ago, the occupied floors of the 1,776-foot tower were topped by “gardens in the sky.” The building has undergone many revisions since then and its precise shape is still being determined, the source said.

Negotiations between Childs and Libeskind have been contentious and are continuing.

Asked about the building Tuesday, Libeskind said, “in the end, I would attempt to make sure the Freedom Tower fits in the entire setting” of his original plan.

Matthew Higgins, chief operating officer of the Lower Manhattan Development Corp., said: “We’re excited by the progress on the building, but more work remains to be done.”

Police chief accused of misusing cash

BALTIMORE (AP)—Maryland’s police superintendent has been indicted on charges of spending charity money on extramarital affairs and personal trips while he was Baltimore’s police commissioner.

Indicted with Edward T. Norris was his former chief of staff at the Baltimore department, John Stendrini. They are accused of misusing more than \$20,000 between May 2000 and August 2002 from an account created from three Depression-era charity funds set up to benefit police officers.

“The defendants repeatedly used the funds as if it were their own ATM,” U.S. Attorney Thomas DiBiagio said Wednesday.

DiBiagio said the pair also used police officers to “transport female companions in connection with romantic encounters” between Norris and at least six women.

Norris, 43, is also accused of lying on a mortgage application to a municipal employees’ credit union.

His attorney, Andrew J. Graham, did not respond to phone calls Wednesday seeking com-



Norris

ment. Stendrini’s attorney, Michael Schatzow, was out of town and could not immediately be reached for comment, his office said.

Norris was the Baltimore police commissioner from May 2000 through 2002, when he left to join the Maryland State Police.

A spokesman for Gov. Robert Ehrlich, who hired Norris as state police superintendent, said the indictment was being reviewed. Asked if Norris had resigned or had been asked to resign, Massoni said, “I can’t say.”

Norris said last summer that he would not step down from his job as superintendent even if he was indicted.

“Unless the governor asks me to leave, I’m not going,” Norris told The (Baltimore) Sun in July. “I haven’t done anything illegal. ... I’ll go to trial if it comes to that.”

Norris is charged with conspiracy to misapply funds, misapplication of funds and making a false statement in a mortgage application. Stendrini, 60, is charged with conspiracy to misapply funds, misapplication of funds and obstruction of justice.

If convicted of all charges, Norris would face a maximum sentence of 45 years. Stendrini would face a maximum sentence of 25 years.

More indictments could follow, DiBiagio said.

“The investigation is continuing, and this case is about more than Ed Norris,” DiBiagio said.

Norris and Stendrini were expected to surrender Thursday and make initial court appearances later that day.

Detroit terror case in danger of reversal

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Bush administration’s first major post-Sept. 11 prosecution, which broke up an al-Qaida cell in Detroit, is in danger of unraveling after the Justice Department divulged it had failed to turn over evidence that might have helped the defense.

The evidence includes a letter from an imprisoned drug gang leader who alleges the government’s key witness confided he made up some of his story.

The December 2001 letter, which could have been used by defense lawyers to challenge the prosecution witness during the trial this spring, wasn’t turned over until a couple of weeks ago.

The defendants are now asking that their convictions be

overturned, and the judge has scheduled an emergency hearing Friday to demand an explanation from the government.

“It has come to the attention of the court that the government has recently provided defendants with certain material that was not provided to defendants either prior to or during trial of this matter,” U.S. District Judge Gerald Rosen said in ordering the hearing.

Senior law enforcement officials told The Associated Press on Wednesday the Justice Department is concerned how the judge will rule and will acknowledge that its prosecutors erred.

Under the Supreme Court’s Brady v. Maryland ruling, prosecutors are obligated to turn over

all evidence that can be used to impeach the testimony of prosecution witnesses or to prove innocence.

The Justice Department will argue, however, that the jailhouse allegation that prosecution witness Youssef Hmimssa lied is not supported by the facts and that the convictions should be upheld, the officials said. The two prosecutors who handled the trial have been replaced.

The dramatic turnabout in a case that was one of the administration’s early successes in the war on terror is further complicated by discussions between Congress and the Justice Department over whether the lead trial prosecutor is entitled to whistleblower protection.

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Boston Archdiocese mortgages property

BOSTON (AP)—The sex scandal in the Boston Archdiocese has shaken the church almost literally to its foundations.

To help pay the \$85 million settlement reached with more than 500 victims of child-molesting priests, the archdiocese has mortgaged its very seat of power—the Cathedral of the Holy Cross—and is putting up for sale the archbishop’s residence, an Italian Renaissance-style mansion that was a symbol of the church’s grandeur and authority. Dozens of churches are also expected to be closed in a move at least accelerated by the scandal.

Some of these steps were almost unthinkable just a year ago, when Cardinal Bernard Law was in charge. The archdiocese

fiercely resisted selling property to settle abuse claims before Law finally resigned as archbishop amid fierce criticism of his handling of the sex allegations.

“My sense was this was simply sacrosanct,” said attorney Jeffrey Newman, whose firm represents about half the victims in the settlement. “The property had a long tradition here, but it harkened back to an old regime that believed things like (molestation by priests) should be kept quiet and their reputation should be protected at all costs.”

It was not until the installation over the summer of Archbishop Sean O’Malley, a Capuchin Franciscan friar who had taken a vow of poverty and refused to live in the mansion, that

the church reached the record-breaking settlement.

The opulent three-story mansion, built by a former archbishop on the outskirts of Boston during the 1920s, has been valued at anywhere from \$14 million to \$100 million.

Where previously the mansion had been seen as a shining example of the church’s standing and power, it is now regarded by some as an embarrassing symbol of the arrogance of a church that protected child-molesting priests.

Boston College, a Jesuit university across the street, has expressed interest in the property, but it is unknown if any offers have been made.

The archdiocese expects the sale to raise enough that, when

Thurmond daughter: I feel completely free

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—The 78-year-old daughter of the late Sen. Strom Thurmond and a black maid said Wednesday that now that she has come forward to disclose her heritage, “at last I feel completely free.”

“There are many stories like Sally Hemings’ and mine,” said Essie Mae Washington-Williams, referring to Thomas Jefferson’s relationship with one of his black slaves.

“The unfortunate measure is that not everyone knows about these stories that helped to make America

what it is today,” Williams said.

Williams announced last weekend she is the illegitimate daughter of Thurmond, a former segregationist, and a black teenage maid in his family home, Carrie Butler.

Thurmond was 22 and Butler was 16 when Williams was born in Aiken, S.C., in 1925. She was raised in Pennsylvania by an aunt and uncle, seeing her mother sporadically and not meeting Thurmond until she was 16.

After Thurmond died in June at age 100, Williams said she began to think about ending “all the speculation and questions”

about the long-rumored relationship. She said she did not come forward earlier because she didn’t want to jeopardize Thurmond’s political career.

“I am not bitter. I am not angry,” she said during a news conference just blocks the Statehouse where a monument of Thurmond sits. “In fact, there is a great sense of peace that has come over me in the past year.

“I feel as though a great weight has been lifted. I am Essie Mae Washington-Williams, and at last I feel completely free.”

Thurmond’s family said



Jury deliberates sniper suspect’s fate

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (AP)—The jury in the murder case against sniper suspect Lee Boyd Malvo began deliberating Wednesday, trying to decide whether he was a willing participant in last year’s killings or was brainwashed by John Allen Muhammad.

Malvo’s attorneys mounted an insanity defense, arguing that Muhammad’s indoctrination left him unable to tell right from wrong.

The 18-year-old is charged with capital murder in the Oct. 14, 2002, slaying of FBI analyst Linda Franklin during the three-week reign of terror in the Washington area that left 10 people dead and three wounded.

Malvo is charged under two theories: One accuses him of multiple murders in a three-year period; the second alleges the killing was intended to terrorize the public.

The jury must conclude that Malvo pulled the trigger to convict him under the multiple murder charge. He initially confessed to being the triggerman but recanted several months later.

Muhammad, 42, was convicted of capital murder, and the jury recommended he be put to death.

At least 30 arrested in Ind. heroin ring

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—At least 30 people were arrested in a crackdown on a heroin ring operating in the Midwest for as long as a decade, authorities said Wednesday.

Thirty arrests were made in Indianapolis, Bloomington, Chicago and Cincinnati, and authorities said three more were expected. The operation brought in as much as \$500,000 a month, said Armand McClintock, a Drug Enforcement Administration agent.

The ring had no apparent ties to motorcycle gangs that have been implicated in other drug operations this year in Indiana, McClintock said.

“These are just old-time heroin traffickers,” McClintock said.

Seventeen of those arrested face federal drug conspiracy and possession counts, and others face less serious charges.

Authorities seized \$50,000 in cash, 16 firearms and a quarter-kilogram of heroin with an estimated street value of \$75,000.

Man gets death in pregnant killing

WATERBURY, Conn. (AP)—A jury sentenced a man to death Wednesday for stabbing a pregnant woman to death over a drug debt.

Robert Courchesne was found guilty in 2001 of luring Demetris Rodgers to an ATM and stabbing her to death in 1998. The baby was born minutes after the attack, but died six weeks later. The woman was eight months pregnant.

Prosecutors said Rodgers was stabbed over a \$410 drug debt.

Prosecutor John Connelly argued that Courchesne did not immediately tell anyone what had happened—instead leaving Rodgers in the street to die.

But public defender Ronald Gold said the death penalty should be reserved for “the worst people who commit the worst crimes.”

“Can a good person do something terribly, terribly wrong? Yes. That’s what happened to Bob Courchesne,” Gold said.

Judge Frank M. D’Addabbo will formally sentence Courchesne on Jan. 15. He is bound by the jury’s decision, unless he finds flaws with the verdict.

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Asia

China appeals to Taiwan to open trade

By STEPHANIE HOO
AP WRITER

BELJING (AP)—China appealed to rival Taiwan on Wednesday to reopen direct trade and travel links while vowing to “smash” what it calls an independence movement led by the self-ruled island’s president.

The mainland’s Taiwan Affairs Office said closer integration would help the island’s slumping economy, but renewed

warnings that formal independence could lead to a violent Chinese response.

“We must be well prepared to smash the Taiwan independence activities into pieces,” Li Weiyl, a spokesman for the office, told reporters.

The tone of the briefing—alternately conciliatory and menacing—captured the conflict at the heart of China-Taiwan relations. The briefing was called to release a report launching a new

appeal for closer ties but started with an angry statement denouncing Taiwan’s President Chen Shui-bian.

Chen is “wantonly conducting all kinds of activities for Taiwan independence, plotting to split Taiwan from China,” Li said.

Chen has announced plans to hold a March 20 referendum that asks voters to demand that China redeploy hundreds of missiles pointed at Taiwan, just 100 miles

off China’s coast. Beijing has long feared that any referendum could lead to a vote on independence.

Last week, Washington said it opposed any moves by Taiwan or China to unilaterally change the status quo. Chen has argued that his March 20 vote wouldn’t touch on sensitive sovereignty issues.

Taiwan’s legislature passed two resolutions Tuesday calling on China to remove hundreds of

missiles pointed at the island. The move was part of the opposition’s efforts to counter plans by Chen to hold the referendum by showing that it’s already clear that most Taiwanese want China to remove the missiles.

China also warned Taiwan on Wednesday that it shouldn’t try to join the World Health Organization, arguing that the self-ruled island isn’t an independent country.

neighbor.

Renewing direct links to the mainland—banned by Taiwan since the two sides split in 1949—will “bring benefits to both sides,” said He Shizhong, director of the office’s economics bureau, reading from the report.

Taiwanese businesses are lobbying for an end to the restrictions, complaining that they raise the cost of doing business with China, where many have factories.

Devices on limo saved Musharraf’s life

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—High-tech jamming devices saved Pakistan’s president from an assassination attempt, delaying by a few crucial seconds the detonation of a bomb that targeted his motorcade, intelligence officials told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

As investigators continued their probe into the attack, the government vowed to root out extremism, amid suspicions that al-Qaida or homegrown Islamic militants opposed to Pakistan’s support of the U.S.-led war on terrorism were behind the bombing.

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf was riding in a limousine through the city of Rawalpindi when the blast occurred Sunday evening, ripping through a concrete bridge just after he crossed it.

The bombing was at least the second attempt on Musharraf’s life since he took power in a bloodless coup four years ago.

The sophisticated bomb—initially estimated to contain 550 pounds of explosives—was be-



Musharraf

lieved to include both a remote control and a timing device to trigger it, two intelligence officials told AP.

Jamming equipment in Musharraf’s limousine stopped the timer for about a minute and also jammed the remote control, the officials said.

“It was enough time for Musharraf to cross the bridge,” one of the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The jammers emit a magnetic impulse to block frequencies used

to trigger bombs—including the electronic signals from precision timers. Defense analyst Talat Masood said that security agencies worldwide use such equipment, and it had been imported to Pakistan.

Musharraf said he heard and felt the blast between 30 seconds and a minute after he crossed the bridge. There were no injuries as the bridge was blocked to traffic to let his motorcade pass.

The statement by the mainland’s Taiwan Affairs Office came minutes before Taiwan announced its first SARS case since July, but the timing appeared to be coincidental.

The WHO “is an organization that only sovereign countries have a right to join,” Weiyl said.

Though they say they are one country, Beijing and Taipei have no official relations but extensive commercial ties. Taiwan has been reluctant to allow direct travel and trade links for fear of domination by its giant

Taiwan’s entrepreneurs have invested more than \$100 billion on the mainland since the island lifted a ban on commercial contacts a decade ago.

Tens of thousands of Taiwanese live at least part-time on the mainland and have to travel by way of Hong Kong or other third points when they visit their homes.

“The obstruction of the ‘three direct links’ has been one of the important causes of Taiwan’s economic stagnation,” the report said, referring to direct transportation, trade and

CLUB JAMA

DASSANI COKE
CMYK

World

Siblings separated by Holocaust reunited

By JONATHAN M. KATZ
AP WRITER

BNEI BRAK, Israel (AP)—For nearly 60 years, Binyamin Shilon believed his sister was among the 6 million Jews killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Now he holds her in his arms and cries with joy.

Shilon, 78, and Shoshana November, 73, were separated from each other and their two brothers in their native Poland during the 1930s. After World War II broke out, Shilon ended up joining the Soviet Red Army. His sister was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp in southern Poland.

They survived and emigrated separately to Israel, each believing all the rest of their family had been wiped out by the Nazis.

Then on Friday, an American cousin brought November to Yad Vashem, Israel's official Holocaust memorial authority in Jerusalem, to check the records left by other survivors. The simple check revealed that Shilon was alive, and just a 90-minute drive from her own house.

That night, she spoke to her brother for the first time since 1938.

"Today, even, I don't believe it," November said.

Shilon and November are worn by their years, but were still Bronik and Ruja Szlamowicz, their Polish childhood selves, hugging and nuzzling each other.

Their story has ignited a media frenzy in Israel, and November's tiny Bnei Brak living room has been filled with visitors for the past two days. The siblings have barely had time to embark on the monumental task of catching up on two remarkable lifetimes.

November was a child when her family broke apart, and she spent many of her earliest years in the orphanage of Dr. Janusz Korczak, who would become famous for sacrificing his life rather than abandoning the children under his care in the Warsaw Ghetto.

When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, the siblings' father was shot dead in his home by the Gestapo, and soon she found herself in the Jewish ghetto in Krakow in the care of a stepmother. The little girl escaped the death camps for a time, first by charming a Nazi policeman and then by hiding in the filth of a latrine while the ghetto was liquidated, relatives said.

November nearly died in 1943, when she was sent to Auschwitz and selected to be gassed. She was saved when a stranger pushed her into the line of those allowed to live.

Some 3 million Polish Jews, 90 percent of the country's pre-war Jewish population, were killed in the Holocaust.

November soon found herself back in the care of her stepmother, who she said had be-



Shoshana November, 73, left, and her brother Binyamin Shilon, 78, right, share pictures and memories from their lives before the Holocaust as they sit in November's apartment in the city of Bnei Brak, Israel, Monday, Dec. 22, 2003.

come "a bad woman" serving as a nurse in the hospital of the notorious Nazi doctor Josef Mengele, known for his medical experiments on young Jewish twins. She survived the war in work camps.

Shilon, meanwhile, spent the first years of the war stoking the engines of a river ship in the Soviet-occupied sector of eastern Poland. Sent to the city of Minsk in 1941 after the Germans bombed his ship, Shilon was treated for his wounds, then walked through three cities on

foot and hopped a train to Siberia.

"I wanted to get away from the fighting," Shilon told The Associated Press.

But over a long winter working as a blacksmith, the 17-year-old realized he couldn't walk away from a war that threatened to consume his family. Posing as a Russian, he joined Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's army and headed west. In 1943, as a sergeant, he was sent to the Ukrainian front.

Shilon's battalion spent two

years pushing through the Ukraine and Romania. In early 1945, he returned to Poland with new orders: Liberate Auschwitz.

There was no chance of an immediate postwar reunion. November survived the end of the slaughter in the Ravensbruck camp in Germany. Shilon accepted the fact he would never see his mother, sister or two brothers again.

The siblings came to Israel for different reasons. November spent three years in Germany after the war, a period memori-

alized in a photo of her with Oskar Schindler, who saved Jews by employing them in his factory in Poland. She moved to Palestine on the eve of Israel's 1948 independence to avoid following her stepmother to Canada, settling in the Tel Aviv suburb of Bnei Brak.

Shilon immigrated in 1957 to Tivon, near Haifa, to escape a revival of anti-Semitism in Poland.

The two resumed their lives, married and raised children. November filed her testimony as a Holocaust survivor at Yad Vashem in the 1950s. It took Shilon until 1999, when he finally filled out forms for his mother and all the siblings he believed had been killed by the Nazis, including his little sister Ruja.

On Friday, the first night of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, November's grandson Nir Silberberg, 24, called to ask Shilon three questions: "Does the name 'Szlamowicz' mean anything to you?" "Did you have a sister named 'Ruja'?"

And finally: "Would you like to talk to her?"

The siblings spoke twice that night, and on Saturday saw each other for the first time since 1938. They traded stories and lit Hanukkah candles. November learned she was two years older than she thought.

"It's hard to explain that feeling we have ... It's hard to measure in terms of gain. It's all inside," Shilon said. "You cannot explain it."

Putin vows penalties in sellout probe

MOSCOW (AP)—Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that the government wouldn't launch a broad revision of post-Soviet privatization but indicated that it will crack down on those who broke the law during the controversial sellout.

Putin reaffirmed his earlier stance that the government wasn't planning a major redistribution of assets gained through privatization of state property, but said that "doesn't concern people who weren't observing the law," the Interfax news agency reported.

"I keep hearing that laws were complicated and it was impossible to respect them," Putin said in a speech at the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Yes, laws were complex and intricate, but it was quite possible to respect them. Those who wanted to respect them did so."

Putin's statement is likely to further scare investors already spooked by a probe against Russia's largest oil company, Yukos.

Yukos former chief and a key shareholder, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, is in jail on fraud and tax evasion charges, some of which are linked to a 1994 privatization deal.

On Tuesday, Khodorkovsky was brought to a Moscow court for a second day of hearings on a prosecutors' appeal to keep him in custody for another three months.

Russia's top tycoons won prized state assets at giveaway prices in murky privatization



Putin

auctions, often using their connections in former President Boris Yeltsin's administration.

"Those who were involved in deliberate fraud put themselves in more favorable conditions than those who played by the rules," Putin said. "The latter may not have earned so much money, but they now sleep well."

Putin has cast the Yukos probe as a part of anti-corruption efforts, but it has been widely seen as an example of Kremlin-inspired selective justice intended to avenge Khodorkovsky's political activities.

Report: Bishop orders closing of church

TORONTO (AP)—An Anglican bishop in British Columbia has ordered a church closed after it refused to support same-sex unions and declared itself independent, Canada's National Post newspaper said Tuesday.

Despite the decision by Bishop Michael Ingham to close the Holy Cross Church in Abbotsford, the Rev. James Wagner said his congregation

would celebrate Mass on Christmas as planned.

"As far as the diocese is concerned, we do not exist. We are a non-entity," Wagner was quoted as saying, "but I will not abandon these people. I will continue to pastor and pray for them in the midst of this crisis."

He said Ingham's decision to close the church was a surprise because "it's so close to Christmas."

Ronald Harrison, executive archdeacon of the Diocese of New Westminster, was quoted as saying Holy Cross brought the closure upon itself by seeking episcopal oversight from another bishop.

By declaring itself "independent," the church lost its funding from the archdiocese and eventually Ingham had to close it, Harrison said.

Ingham's decision to sanction same-sex unions and related issues involving homosexuality have caused deep divisions in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Two months ago Anglican leaders met in London at a crisis conference called largely because of dissension over the choice of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire and Ingham's approval of same-sex unions.

Germany won't send suspect back to jail

HAMBURG, Germany (AP)—A Moroccan charged with aiding a Hamburg al-Qaida cell that included three of the Sept. 11 hijackers can remain free while his trial continues, a court announced Tuesday, rejecting a request by prosecutors to return him to custody.

The Hamburg state court freed Abdelghani Mzoudi on Dec. 11 after German federal investigators presented a statement quoting an unidentified informant as saying that only four people in Hamburg knew of the Sept. 11 plot—not including Mzoudi.

Prosecutors lost a federal appeal against the decision Friday. On Tuesday, the Hamburg court said it had denied their second request to re-arrest Mzoudi, made after a federal agent testified last week that German authorities have more evidence against him.

The court insisted that the government's case against Mzoudi still fails to warrant keeping him jailed.

Mzoudi faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of charges of supporting a terror organization and more than 3,000 counts of accessory to murder.

The government's case was weakened this month with the introduction of a new statement believed to be by Ramzi Binalshibh, in U.S. custody since his arrest in Pakistan last year. The statement said that only Binalshibh—the Hamburg cell's presumed contact with al-Qaida—and the three Hamburg-based suicide hijackers knew of the plot.

The court on Tuesday rejected suggestions by prosecutors that Binalshibh had an interest in protecting others involved in the plot.

Based on current evidence, the judges "did not reach the conclusion" that the statements were a protective attempt by Binalshibh, a court statement said.

8 Palestinians killed in Gaza Strip raid

By IBRAHIM BARZAK
AP WRITER

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—An Israeli raid on a Gaza refugee camp killed eight Palestinians on Tuesday in a flare-up of violence that came just hours after a high-level Egyptian peace mission to Israel.

The one-day visit Monday by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher was marred by a confrontation with Palestinian extremists at the Al Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, that landed him briefly in the hospital.

Israel earlier told Maher it would abide by a cease-fire with the Palestinians, though it would not sign a truce with militant groups.

Early Tuesday, about 40 Israeli tanks and armored vehicles entered the Rafah refugee camp on the Gaza-Egypt border, Palestinians said.

Eight Palestinians—five militants and three civilians—were killed and at least 41 other people, including nine children, were wounded by Israeli gunfire, hospital officials said. The violence marked the bloodiest day in Gaza in two months.

One of those killed, Ahmed Majar, 32, was a Palestinian police officer heading to his job at the Rafah border crossing. He was shot in the head, his family said.

At funerals held hours later, the sounds of mourning mixed with those of gunfire and tanks moving as the incursion continued.

The army, which has raided Rafah repeatedly in recent weeks, said the operation was a part of its ongoing efforts to expose weapons smuggling



AP
Israeli soldiers take positions at the Kisufim junction in the Gaza Strip, after a heavy exchange of fire with Palestinian gunmen, Monday Dec. 22, 2003. Two Israeli army officers were killed during the attack, and one of the gunmen was shot dead by Israeli troops.

tunnels and that troops fired in response to attacks by Palestinian militants.

"In the past, these tunnels have been used for delivering arms to terrorists for direct use against Israeli civilians, and Israel has vowed to put an end to such tunnels," said David Baker, an official in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office.

Masked men with camouflage uniforms and headbands of the militant Hamas group ran through the town's alleys with machine guns. At the hospital, a man in a camouflage uniform and bleeding from his head was brought in on a stretcher.

Residents said families fled the area in their pajamas and Is-

raeli snipers were firing from rooftops. Helicopters flew overhead and explosions were heard throughout the morning. At least seven houses were destroyed, residents said.

Also Tuesday, two gunmen shot an Israeli vehicle in a rare attack along the border with Egypt, the army and witnesses said. The car was hit, but no one was injured, and the army was searching for the attackers. It was not immediately clear where the gunmen came from.

In separate violence, a Palestinian threw a grenade Monday evening at Israeli soldiers in Gaza during a firefight, killing two officers, the army said. Soldiers killed the attacker and an-

other armed Palestinian, the military said.

The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a group loosely linked to Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, and the Islamic Jihad took responsibility.

After the attack, the army raided a nearby village, destroy-

ing six houses and razing several farms, witnesses said. The army had no immediate comment.

In the West Bank city of Nablus, Israeli troops closed off the refugee camp of Balata on Tuesday with piles of dirt and trenches while searching

for militants.

As part of Egypt's efforts to broker a cease-fire in the conflict, Maher met with Israeli officials Monday. On his return to Egypt early Tuesday, he said he was undaunted by the Al Aqsa confrontation.

"We are working so the Palestinian people can regain their rights and achieve peace and sovereignty and establish a Palestinian state," Maher said. "(The attack) is a passing matter that does not affect the essence of the Egyptian policy ... Nothing will change that."

During the confrontation, Maher appeared shaken as bodyguards and Israeli police whisked him out of the mosque compound, while protesters shouted and hurled shoes—a deep insult in Islamic culture. The guards supported Maher as he grimaced and clutched his chest.

Witnesses heard him gasping, "I'm going to choke, I'm going to choke," as he left the compound through a gate above the Western Wall, a Jewish holy site.

Israeli rescue workers treated him for 30 minutes before he was transferred by limousine to Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital. He was released five hours after the incident and flew home.

Israeli police said they arrested seven suspects in the attack.

Castro: I warned Saddam to leave Kuwait

By ALEXANDRA OLSON
AP WRITER

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)—Cuban leader Fidel Castro said he repeatedly warned Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait after the 1990 invasion but that the former Iraqi dictator's "mistakes" did not justify the U.S.-led war.

Castro, who was in Venezuela for one day to meet with leftist President Hugo Chavez, said he tried on numerous occasions to persuade Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait, warning the Iraqi leader that, not just Western countries, but also Arab nations, would turn against him.

Castro called Saddam's invasion of Iran "absolutely unjust," during an interview with Venezuela's state-run television station, Venezolana de Television.

"The other big mistake that never should have been made was the occupation of Ku-

wait," he added, wearing his olive-green fatigues for the interview on Venezuela's La Orchila island.

"We made great efforts [to persuade Saddam] to rectify," he said.

Castro said he sent two letters to Saddam to try to "persuade him that it was a mistake and he should withdraw" from Kuwait "or there would be a war with a coalition (of) Arabs, NATO, Muslims, everyone because Kuwait was a country recognized by the United Nations."

In the 1980s, Saddam waged an eight-year war against Iran that killed hundreds of soldiers on both sides. He invaded Kuwait in 1990 but a U.S.-led coalition drove his army out.

But Castro said the American-led pre-emptive strike had imposed an international "law of the jungle."

"What protection is there for

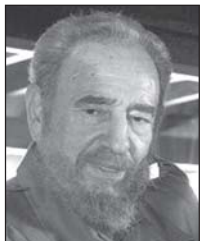
medium, small countries?" said the communist leader, who has accused the United States of seeking a pretext to invade Cuba. "They haven't even found weapons of mass destruction."

Chavez sat in on the interview, hugging and thanking Castro at the end.

In a visit surrounded by secrecy, Chavez and Castro discussed joint initiatives to provide health care and education for the poor. Until the interview, there had been no official confirmation of where the two leaders met.

"The encounter was very lovely. We ate Cuban food for lunch and had a Venezuelan breakfast," Chavez told reporters. "There wasn't an important issue we didn't touch."

It was Castro's fourth visit to Venezuela since Chavez took office in 1999. Previous visits between Chavez and Castro had been more public, with the two leaders playing baseball together, hosting a talk show and celebrating birthdays.



Mugs

CLUB JAMA

Gadhafi: We don't want to hide anything

By GEORGE JAHN
AP Writer

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—The head of the U.N. atomic watchdog agency said he will lead the first inspection of Libya's nuclear facilities as soon as next week, aiming to kick-start the elimination of the country's programs for weapons of mass destruction. Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi said he had nothing to hide. "Come and see what it is, we don't want to hide anything," he told CNN.

Speaking of other nations with nuclear weapons, Gadhafi said they should also open themselves to inspections.

"In my opinion they should follow the steps, or take the example of Libya, so that they prevent any tragedy from (being) inflicted on their people," he said.

He added that this sort of openness would force Israel to "expose their programs of and their weapons of mass destruction."

In the wake of Libya's surprise admission, Pakistan acknowledged Monday the possibility that some of its scientists may have provided nuclear technology to foreign nations.

Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said he could make his trip Libya sometime next week.

In Washington, White House press secretary Scott McClellan said the United States expects Gadhafi "to act on the commitments he's made. And the initial signs are positive."

Pakistan's government has strongly denied allegations it gave such information to countries such as Iran, North Korea and Libya - but said Monday it has questioned the founder of its nuclear program as part of its inquiry into whether any of its scientists acted without authorization.

Both Libya and Iran have imported centrifuges for uranium enrichment, although Libya—which publicly admitted it was seeking to develop weapons

of mass destruction—says it stopped short of an enrichment program. Diplomats have identified Pakistan as one source of Iran's equipment procurement.

The founder of Pakistan's nuclear program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, was been questioned as part of the debriefing of a "very small number of scientists," but is not in custody, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Masood Khan.

At least two scientists from Khan Research Laboratories, the country's top nuclear laboratory named after its founder, have been held for questioning this month.

The Bush administration registered its confidence in Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Musharraf assured Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2002 that Pakistan was not leaking any technology, "and we continue to accept that assurance," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Monday.

At the same time, Boucher said, "we'd certainly welcome Pakistan's

investigation and its debriefing of individuals who may have valuable information" bearing on Musharraf's assurances.

ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said much of Libya's technology came from abroad, but declined to say whether there was a common source for Libya, Iran or prewar Iraq—or whether the three nations exchanged equipment and expertise.

"There has been, of course, a good deal of importation from abroad of equipment and material," he told reporters. "We do not know yet whether there was any linkage with other nations."

Diplomats familiar with the agency said ElBaradei could fly to Tripoli on Friday. They also said he and the IAEA were scrambling to play catch-up after being caught off guard by Libya's admission, the result of nine months of secret negotiations with Britain and the United States.

ElBaradei praised the Libyan move "to rid itself of all programs or activities that are relevant or could lead to the production of weapons of mass destruction."

Libya agreed to tell the IAEA about current nuclear programs, adhere to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and sign an additional protocol to allow wide-ranging inspections on short notice.

ElBaradei said Libya's weapons research effort started with a program to enrich uranium through spinning in centrifuges "sometime in the 80s (and) picked up steam in the 90s."

The United States had also learned that Libya had tens of tons of mustard agent, a World War I-era chemical weapon, produced about 10 years ago. It also had aircraft bombs capable of dispersing the mustard agent in combat. In addition, it had a supply of Scud-C ballistic missiles made in North Korea. The weapons can hit targets 500 miles away.

US troops arrest rebel suspects in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—U.S. forces arrested eight rebel suspects in a stronghold of anti-American resistance northwest of Baghdad, the military said, as troops tightened security against possible attacks over the Christmas holidays.

Those arrested include an ex-colonel accused of recruiting guerrillas and four suspected associates of fugitive former Vice President Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, who is believed to have a leading role in Iraq's insurgency.

Three soldiers of the U.S.-led coalition died Monday. Two U.S. soldiers and an Iraqi translator were killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad. A Polish soldier died when a fellow soldier's gun fired accidentally in Babylon, south of Baghdad, hours after a visit by Poland's President Aleksander Kwasniewski.

In Mosul, the largest city in northern Iraq, gunmen fatally shot judge Youssef Murad in his car. The assailants escaped.

Also in Mosul, rebels on Tuesday fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a convoy of four U.S. Humvees escorting a cash delivery to a city bank. One soldier was wounded, according to a U.S. soldier at the scene who declined to give his name.

South Korea is planning to send 3,000 troops to join 460 military medics and engineers already in Iraq, media reports from Seoul said Tuesday. That deployment, for nine months from April 1, would make the South Korean contingent the third-largest in the 26-nation coalition after the United States and Britain.

Meanwhile, President Bush received an update on Iraq in a Monday meeting in Washington with L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. administrator of Iraq, and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.

Bremer told NBC earlier that "there's been a suggestion of high terror threats" in Iraq in recent weeks unrelated to Saddam Hussein's capture on Dec. 13.

In Baghdad, Brig. Gen. Mark Hertling of the 1st Armored Division said, "We have some indications that it would be prudent to take some additional measures to counter specific



US soldier of the military police, James Hawkins, from Texas, uses his radio as he stands atop his humvee during his daily patrol in Tikrit, Iraq, Monday, Dec. 22, 2003.

potential threats."

Hertling told The Associated Press in an e-mail that, in the past week, his

division had captured "nine senior leaders in the former regime network" and were pursuing another dozen.

Rock singer gets 3 years in prison for inciting hate

BERLIN—In the first case of its kind in Germany, a right-wing rock band was deemed a criminal organization and its lead singer was sentenced Monday to more than three years in prison for lyrics that venerate Nazism and incite racial hatred.

A Berlin criminal court sentenced 38-year-old Michael Regener to 40 months in prison after a six-month trial that tested the bounds of free expression in a nation with strict laws against hate speech. The court ruled that Regener's band, Landser, is a threat to the country's Jews and millions of African and Muslim immigrants.

The band's bass player, Andre Moericke, and its drummer, Christian Wenndorff, were each sentenced to nearly two years' probation and ordered to perform 90 hours of community service. Founded in 1992 as the Final Solution, the band has been a favorite of neo-Nazis worldwide and a troubling voice of intolerance.

"This is the first time that a band has been found to be a criminal organization," said prosecutor Joachim Lampe.

The band members, who have long hair and wear black leather jack-

ets, refer to themselves as "terrorists with electric guitars." Their lyrics are more intellectual than those of most skinhead bands, but their agenda is just as blunt. "Let's get the enemy, bombs on Israel," go the words of one song. Another tune laments: "In the old days, Africa was wonderful/Now our white brothers stand with their backs against the wall."

Enacted after the Holocaust, this country's anti-discrimination laws are among the most stringent in the world. They forced Landser—an old German word for foot soldier that was used during World War II—to produce four of its compact discs outside the country. The recordings were advertised on the Internet and shipped by mail order to evade German authorities.

The band quickly became a symbol for far-right radicals, and its songs praised skinheads for a series of arson and murders against Germany's immigrant communities in the late 1990s. Testifying at Landser's trial, Thorsten Heise, a prominent neo-Nazi, told the court that Regener's lyrics are "radical, a little bit more thoughtful, ironic and full of humor."

Landser was viewed by some as a

Moscow court considers oil exec detention

MOSCOW (AP)—A Moscow court resumed hearings on a prosecutors' appeal to keep Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the embattled former chief of Russia's largest oil company, in custody for another three months.

Khodorkovsky, who has been in detention since Oct. 25, is facing fraud and tax evasion charges. President Vladimir Putin has cast the probe as part of an anti-corruption crusade, but the charges have been widely seen as a Kremlin-backed attempt to curb Khodorkovsky's political clout and avenge his funding of opposition parties.

If the court sides with prosecutors, Khodorkovsky would remain behind bars until after the March 14 presidential election.

Khodorkovsky—Russia's richest person according to Forbes magazine—resigned as chief executive of the Yukos oil company shortly after his arrest. He remains Yukos' major stockholder, although a court has frozen his shares.

During Monday's session, prosecutors said they had formally extended Khodorkovsky's pretrial investigation until the end of March, but could not produce a document to prove that.

Defense lawyer Anton Drel said that the prosecutors' failure to provide a document had made their push for keeping Khodorkovsky in custody groundless.

"If the court decides to extend his detention, it would be absolutely illegal," Drel told NTV television.

Canada court keeps marijuana illegal

By TARA BRAUTIGAM
AP WRITER

TORONTO (AP)—Canada’s supreme court upheld the country’s current laws against marijuana possession, even as Prime Minister Paul Martin presses to eliminate jail sentences for people caught with small amounts of the drug.

In a 6-3 decision, the justices ruled that possession of marijuana would remain a criminal offense for now. In a separate, unanimous decision, it maintained trafficking of the drug was illegal.

The ruling does not preclude Martin from going ahead with a proposed bill that would soften penalties. President Bush has expressed concerns over the bill, fearing it could encourage drug smuggling along the border.

The court ruling prompted praise from law enforcement groups but disappointment from proponents of marijuana legalization.

“My huge patriotism may slowly be dissipating. I have a

lot of faith in my country, in freedom and justice, but it doesn’t seem like we have a whole lot of that left,” said Dominic Kramer, a marijuana activist who runs a store that sells hemp products and paraphernalia in Toronto.

Tony Cannavino, president of the Canadian Police Association, welcomed the decision but expressed concern over Martin’s intent to pursue the controversial bill. He said marijuana growing seemed to be on the rise.

“We have more and more ‘grow ops’ across the country,” he told reporters in Ottawa. “You wouldn’t see that 10 years ago.”

A key question in the Supreme Court decision was whether Parliament has the constitutional right to punish marijuana possession, given the lack of proven serious harms from its use.

The high court examined three cases involving two pot activists and one man who was caught smoking. All three failed to persuade lower courts that the pot law is unconstitutional.



David Malmo-Levine smokes a joint while awaiting the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision on marijuana possession at the headquarters of the B.C. Marijuana Party in Vancouver Tuesday, Dec. 23, 2003. AP

Defendant David Malmo-Levine took a hit of hash last May before arguing his case in person at the high court while dressed head-to-toe in clothes made of hemp cloth. He once ran the Harm Reduction Club, a

non-profit cooperative in Vancouver that offered advice on safe marijuana use while supplying it to some 1,800 members.

Another case centered on Christopher Clay, who ran the Hemp Nation in London,

Ontario, a store he started with a government loan. He sold marijuana seeds and seedlings in a deliberate challenge to the law.

Alan Young, lawyer for Clay, said his initial disappointment shifted to anger after leaf-

ing through the lengthy decision.

“There’s so much smoke and mirrors in this,” he said. “This issue has been a political hot potato that has bounced between Parliament and the courts for the past decade.”

Last week Martin said he planned to reintroduce a bill, first proposed under former Prime Minister Jean Chretien, that would wipe out potential jail time and criminal records for those convicted of marijuana possession.

The bill did not legalize the drug, and maintained or increased already stiff penalties for large-scale growers and traffickers. It made possession of less than 15 grams of pot a minor offense punishable by fines of \$100 to \$400, much like traffic tickets.

Critics said 15 grams, the equivalent of roughly 15 to 20 joints, was too much to equate with casual use.

But the legislation died when Parliament adjourned last month to give Martin a fresh start in January.

US Embassy in Bahrain warns of attack

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—The U.S. Embassy in Bahrain said Tuesday it has received information about a possible terrorist attack in the Persian Gulf country during the holiday season.

In a written statement, it urged Americans to avoid places where Westerners congregate and to reduce unnecessary travel. It said they should maintain an unpredictable daily schedule and vary their travel routes.

An embassy spokeswoman declined to comment on any changes to the mission’s own security following the warning.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the embassy in Bahrain “thought it was prudent at this time to put out a general announcement to the American community since that’s where this particular threat is centered, that alerted them to the possibility of attacks there.”

The warning comes as the United States tightens security because of fears of terrorism over Christmas and the New Year holiday. On Sunday, the U.S. security level was raised to orange, which is “high” alert, from yellow, or “elevated.”

The Bahrain warning is in effect until Jan. 2, the embassy said. It said U.S. officials were seeking more information on the terrorism threat.

Bahrain, an island nation

Russia sending only professional troops

MOSCOW (AP)—Starting next year Russia will send only professional troops to Chechnya instead of draftees, the defense minister said Tuesday as he inspected the country’s first all-volunteer division.

Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told the 76th Airborne that as the first unit to fully switch from conscripts it would serve as a model for

the rest of the military.

“It has helped us obtain a lot of experience that we can later use in staffing other military units with contract servicemen,” the Interfax news agency quoted Ivanov as saying as he visited the division’s base in Pskov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made reforming the underfunded and demoralized military his top priority. But he

has backtracked on his initial plan to fully phase out the unpopular draft, accepting the military’s proposal for a mixture of draftees and volunteer professional soldiers.

Under that plan, professional soldiers and officers would account for half the 1.1 million-strong military by the end of 2007.

Most would serve in high-

readiness units such as those serving in the Chechnya, which Ivanov said would be staffed by volunteer soldiers starting next year. The starting monthly salary for a volunteer private in Chechnya will be \$510, he said.

By comparison, a private in the 76th division earns only \$170, roughly the average monthly wage in Russia.

Clashes continue in Chechnya despite Kremlin claims that the war has ended and the Caucasus Mountains region is returning to normalcy.

On Tuesday two police officers were killed in a shootout with rebels in the capital Grozny that also left a female bystander dead, an official in the pro-Kremlin Chechen administration said.

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Britain to cast light on honors system

By JILL LAWLESS
AP WRITER

LONDON (AP)—Sir Mick Jagger was delighted to become a knight. Keith Richards called it a disgrace.

As with the Rolling Stones, so with British society: Some crave titles, some refuse them, some consider it all a joke. Still others, like Winston Churchill, change their minds—perhaps when later offered a higher rank or from a government more to their taste.

The Sunday Times this week published a list of 300 people—including singer David Bowie, comedian John Cleese and actors Albert Finney and Kenneth

Branagh—who declined honors since 1945.

About 2 percent of the 3,000 people chosen each year decline, according to the government. Most do so quietly, but last month poet Benjamin Zephaniah publicly rejected an OBE—Officer of the Order of the British Empire—because the title reminded him of “thousands of years of brutality.”

“Stick it, Mr. Blair and Mrs. Queen, stop going on about empire,” he wrote in The Guardian newspaper.

After the list was published, Prime Minister Tony Blair’s government promised to make the system of awarding knighthoods and other honors more open.

Twice a year the government announces recipients of a host of titles, from knighthoods and damehoods to Companions of Honor, for exceptional achievement or service to the nation. Though the honors are bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II, most recipients are chosen by committees of civil servants from nominations made by the government and the public.

The government wants to increase diversity on the selection committees—currently largely white, male and over 60—and among recipients. Government statistics show that between 2 and 4 percent of the top honors go to ethnic minorities, who make up about 8 percent of the population.

But some lawmakers are

calling for a bigger overhaul.

“I think they are decided on a whim, I think they are capricious,” said Labor Party lawmaker Gordon Prentice. “I just think it is time to get rid of all these ridiculous gradations. We need an open, simple, transparent system. The whole system really needs shaking up.”

The Cabinet Office said all decisions about honors were made “entirely on merit.”

However, one leaked document revealed that tennis star Tim Henman was being recommended for an OBE to “add interest” to the list. When the New Year’s Honors are announced next week, Henman now is in the no-win situation of being re-

Celebrities who refused British honors

Some who refused British honors, according to a list published by The Sunday Times. CBE is Commander of the British Empire, OBE Officer of the Order of the British Empire.

- Michael Frayn, writer, declined knighthood, 2003
- John Cleese, comedian, declined CBE, 1996
- Kenneth Branagh, actor, declined CBE, 1994
- Geraldine McEwan, actress, declined damehood 2002, declined OBE 1986
- Honor Blackman, actress, declined CBE, 2002
- Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders, comedians, declined OBE, 2001
- Albert Finney, actor, declined knighthood, 2000
- David Bowie, singer, declined CBE, 2000
- Alan Bennett, playwright, declined knighthood, 1996
- Roald Dahl, author, declined OBE, 1986
- Aldous Huxley, author, declined knighthood, 1959
- Evelyn Waugh, author, declined CBE, 1959

Changed their minds:

- Helen Mirren, actress, declined CBE 1996; accepted damehood 2003
- Bridget Riley, artist, declined damehood 1994; accepted Companion of Honor 1999
- David Hockney, artist, declined knighthood 1990; accepted Companion of Honor 1997
- Alfred Hitchcock, film director, declined CBE 1962; accepted knighthood 1980
- Vanessa Redgrave, actress, declined damehood, 1999; accepted CBE, 1967
- Paul Scofield, actor, declined knighthood 1968, 1974, 1986; accepted CBE 1956, Companion of Honor 2001
- Graham Greene, writer, declined OBE 1956; accepted Companion of Honor 1966, Order of Merit 1986
- V.S. Naipaul, author, declined CBE, 1977; accepted knighthood, 1990

vealed as considered but rejected, or given an honor for dubious reasons.

A prominent scientist, Colin Blakemore, threatened to resign as head of the Medical Research Council following reports that he was excluded from a knighthood because he is a vocal proponent of research on animals.

While rockers including Jagger, Elton John and Paul McCartney have been happy to accept knighthoods, many celebrities have quietly refused. Rolling Stones guitarist Richards—who apparently has not been offered an award—criticized Jagger for accepting the “paltry honor.”

Bowie turned down a CBE—Commander of the British Empire—and was quoted as saying he would never accept a

knighthood. “I seriously don’t know what it’s for,” he said.

Writer J.G. Ballard, whose novels include “Crash” and “Empire of the Sun,” said he declined a CBE for services to literature. “I am opposed to the honors system. The whole thing is a preposterous charade,” he was quoted as saying by The Sunday Times.

A parliamentary committee has indicated it will look into the leaking of the list to the newspaper, according to the BBC.

Grumbling over titles is nothing new. In the 13th century, when knights were expected to do military service, so many men declined the honor that King Henry III began imposing fines on those who refused, according to Debrett’s Peerage & Baronetage.

Churchill said he could not

Dutch flu outbreak reaches epidemic

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (AP)—More than 15 of every 10,000 Dutch citizens have flu symptoms, enough to qualify the current outbreak as an epidemic, the National Flu Center said Tuesday.

Infection rates have risen sharply in the last two weeks, said the center’s director, virologist Ab Osterhaus, but the current influenza strains are normal and not especially dangerous.

However, he said it was “worrisome” that this year’s flu shots failed to give adequate protection against one common strain, called the “Fujian.”

Osterhaus said flu epidemics typically last 6 to 10 weeks once they begin. It likely will affect 2 to 10 percent of the 16 million Dutch population over the course of the winter.

Flu data is obtained from doctors who track the number of patients they treat with flu symptoms. Because only those who seek a doctor’s help are reported, the percentage of people actually infected is higher.

“Most people who realize they have the flu don’t go to a doctor, they just stay home and try to get better,” Osterhaus said.

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Science & Technology

Bias keeps internet from global expansion



By ANICK JESDANUN
AP INTERNET WRITER

Rahul Dewan typed “India” into the search box of an online stock photo service, hoping to find digital images of his native country. He found only three—all of flags.

Dewan then typed “Switzerland,” a country smaller than his, and found 33, while “USA” returned 72.

His demonstration underscores a major challenge in getting the developing world online: Even with access, the Internet remains meaningless to most of the world’s population, its Web sites heavy in English and reflecting a Western tilt.

Dewan, managing director of the New Delhi software company Srijan Technologies, ultimately settled for Western faces and hands on his Web site, after failing to find Indian images he could use or a similar photo service catering to Indians.

So much for promoting his company as a homegrown business.

“They probably think this company belongs to somebody in the USA,” Dewan lamented at last week’s U.N. information technology summit. “Everything caters to the Western audience.”

People and organizations who work on connecting villages and schools throughout the world say their efforts only begin with providing Internet access and teaching people how to use computers.

There must be compelling information, in native languages and mindful of local traditions and distinctions—such as audio and illustrations for the illiterate.

“Getting technology into people’s hands is one thing. Getting people to use it is key,” said Daniel Wagner, director of the International Literacy Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.

Much of the Web these days is built by private ventures—mostly in the West and mostly targeting where they believe the money is: the industrialized world.

As a result, there’s little specific to developing countries, which remain largely offline. According to the U.N. International Telecommunication Union, 1.5 billion villages have no access at all to phones or the Internet, and 70 percent of Internet users live in countries that make up only 16 percent of the world’s population.

Some delegates to last week’s U.N. World Summit on the Information Society complained that even when Web

sites aren’t in English, they are usually in French, Spanish or one of a handful of other languages common in the industrialized world.

Adama Samassekou, Mali’s former minister of education, said languages spoken by millions of Africans, including Mandingo and Kiswahili, are virtually nonexistent online.

With more than 95 percent of Pakistan’s literacy base in Urdu, the Internet is relevant to only the country’s elite 5 percent, said Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Pakistan’s minister of information and technology.

The solution involves more than translating English sites.

To address illiteracy, South Africa is developing speech recognition, text-to-speech and other voice technologies, starting in Zulu. An open source model will let others adapt the tools for additional languages at little cost.

Sherrin Issac, a policy director at South Africa’s Department of Science and Technology, said many existing, Western technologies are inadequate—one voice compression algorithm, for instance, drops some “clicks” in conversations, changing the meaning of words.

Bulgaria, South Korea and other countries, meanwhile, are producing

government sites in native languages. But Internet users often must type English addresses to reach them.

One Korean company, Netpia, has developed a proprietary keyword system, so a Korean typing “Yahoo” in that language would automatically get the Korean version of Yahoo Inc. Netpia executive Jason Sohn said some sites saw traffic triple after using such keywords.

The Internet’s key oversight body also is studying domain names entirely in non-English characters—instead of requiring “.com” or another English suffix.

Other challenges remain.

The Canadian government still must adapt its internal search engine to accommodate online materials in Inuktitut, the Inuit language. English and French speakers can find synonyms like “fast” and “quick” in one search, but extending that capability to Inuktitut first requires creating an electronic dictionary.

In recent months, Microsoft Corp. began a local language program to help universities and governments adapt its software to more languages. King Letsie III of Lesotho, meanwhile, is promoting open source and free software as a way to let countries adapt

tools for their domestic needs.

A desire also exists to ensure that Web sites are culturally relevant—not limited to white faces, U.S. dollars and Western values. That, for instance, could mean write-ups in support of marrying cousins, a union rejected in the industrialized world.

Jerry Kennelly, whose Irish-based photo service Stockbyte was the site Dewan had demonstrated, acknowledged that only a fifth of people featured there are non-Caucasian, reflecting marketing demands.

“We’re not in the business of running a charity,” Kennelly said. “The minute we see a justifiable demand, we will be on it like a dog out of the traps at the greyhound races.”

Until then, the task of diversifying content has largely fallen on groups like Viva Rio, which has trained residents of Brazil’s urban slums, the favelas, to write about themselves, countering the news about crime and other problems dominant in Western outlets.

“The point is to produce more content that is useful,” said Bernardo Sorj, an adviser to Viva Rio. “If people go on the Internet and do not find good content for themselves, then they go to pornography.”

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Season's Greetings: They're in the e-cards

By **DON OLDENBURG**
THE WASHINGTON POST

Here it is just before Christmas and you didn't get around to sending out holiday cards, did you? Well, send season's e-card greetings!

"Internet cards are quick and easy and a good way to buzz someone," says District of Columbia resident Antonia Balazs, 36, who began sending her Christmas e-cards to friends last week.

As a paid subscriber at American Greetings' electronic-card Web site, Balazs has unlimited access to thousands of e-cards for all occasions throughout the year. She regularly sends e-cards for birthdays and thank-you notes. And now that it's Christmastime, she's sending mostly e-cards—though her short list gets store-bought paper cards.

"A paper card requires more time and effort. It is more thoughtful," says Balazs. "Close friends and family get that thoughtfulness. Others might not. At least this way, I've followed through in some fashion."

But holiday e-cards face uphill sledding against unyielding traditions this time of year. Seems a Merry Techie Christmas isn't everyone's vision of sugarplum fairies.

According to the Washington-based Greeting Card Association, a trade group representing the \$7.5 billion industry, more than 60 percent of the 7 billion cards sold each year will be Christmas cards. A GCA survey found that 92 percent of consumers planned to purchase paper greeting cards this holiday season; 76 percent said they would send out 20 or more.

"E-cards are another avenue or supplement, but they don't replace tra-



ditional paper cards," says GCA's executive director, Valerie Cooper. "E-cards aren't quite as special as when someone takes the time to send you an individual card."

According to Hallmark, during all of last year people sent 88 million free e-cards for various occasions from its online site—and 946,000 of those were a last-minute flurry on Christmas Eve.

"People aren't convinced they have the same desired effect," says Hallmark spokeswoman Deidre Parkes. "Seventy-three percent of people surveyed said they send holiday cards because they know how good it feels to receive them. ... That doesn't necessarily happen with e-card sending."

E-cards don't stack up against paper cards for other reasons. Some recipients have slow online computer connections, which can make e-cards frus-

trating. And spam filters and virus worries are to e-cards what dogs are to postal carriers.

The biggest selling point for e-cards has been that they were free. But this year most e-card Web sites shifted to subscription services—\$10 to \$20 a year—cooling some users' interest, says Parkes. Hallmark.com still boasts a huge selection of free e-cards—including 70 free holiday e-cards, many of them animated action scenes with holiday music.

"Postage isn't getting any cheaper!" says Jean Barto, a retired Army Reserve officer in Newport News, Va., who has sent 50 paper Christmas cards this year and, just last week, a dozen or so free e-cards. But she thinks the convenience argument for e-cards is overblown.

"When I send out the online cards, it takes nearly as long to do so as to write out and address a traditional card," says Barto. But e-cards come in handy for people whose snail-mail addresses she can't

find, she says. "There might be some people on my traditional card list that may migrate to the online list—if they fail to send me a card back this year."

But e-cards' biggest obstacle is tradition. "Americans at Christmas are very steeped in that tradition," says Tina Benavides, executive director of card planning at American Greetings Corp.

People line their mantels with them, string them across doorways and hang them on their Christmas trees. "You could do that with (printed-out) e-cards but realistically you might not want to," says Benavides, who sends e-cards mostly to her dot-com friends. "I could never send my mother an e-card. But if you know someone who is into high-tech, then why not?"

And that's the niche approach e-card sellers are taking.

"Things are starting to really ramp up," says Sharon Schneider, senior vice presi-



dent and general manager for greetings at Bluemount.com, AmericanGreetings.com and e-greetings.com—all subscriber sites owned by American Greetings.

She says e-card sender demographics skew younger, more male and edgier than traditional greeting card buyers. The most popular Christmas e-card last year at Americangreetings.com was "Santa Boogie"—a cinematic Claymation-style e-card of a rotund St. Nick rockin' out on a rooftop. On e-greetings.com, flatulence e-cards are big sellers even in the holiday season. "A lot of it truly is all about the recipient," she says. "You pick the product that meets your needs."

Especially Wednesday—the busiest e-card day of the year. "The number of e-cards that will be sent will be in the millions," Schneider predicts. "It's a nice solution that lets people know you are thinking of them—even at the last minute."



By **JOHN M. MORAN**
THE HARTFORD COURANT

If you're at all like me, you're hoping gadgets will be among your holiday gifts this season. And why not? Computer equipment and other electronics have been staples of holiday gift-giving for years.

So let's suppose you're lucky enough to get a new PC or cell phone or some other gadget. What are you going to do with the old stuff?

That's an increasingly important and vexing question. As our technology gets replaced, we're generating mountains of obsolete gear that needs to be disposed of.

And I do mean mountains. In the five years between 2000 and 2005, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that as many as 250 million PCs will be junked.

Don't forget cell phones. Experts predict that new laws allowing consumers to keep their existing phone numbers when switching wireless carriers could prompt a wave of changes. Those consumers who do switch carriers are likely to switch phones, too, ditching millions of cell phones in the process.

Trouble is, much of that stuff contains hazardous materials that shouldn't just be thrown in the trash along with your food packaging and used napkins. Hazardous substances—such as lead, mercury, cadmium and barium—are common in computer equipment and other electronics.

Unfortunately, the electronics industry has only begun coming to grips with the problems created by obsolete technology. Recycling programs are few and often expensive, because there are more gadgets needing to be recycled

than there is demand for recycled parts.

Those of you who are determined to recycle—and good for you, if you are—can visit Electronics Recycling at www.electronicrecycling.net or information on where and how to dispose of old gadgets.

Tom Gaffey, the director of recycling for the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority, urged residents not to throw junk electronics in with the regular refuse.

"Undoubtedly thousands of people will be buying new electronic equipment to replace older equipment over the holidays," Gaffey said. "Our message to the folks out there is to hold onto it until the next recycling."

Perhaps an even better solution is to find your stuff a new home. Identifying someone who can still use equipment that no longer suits you has

a double benefit. Not only do you avoid polluting the environment, but you give someone else a chance to enjoy technology that otherwise would go to waste.

Some nonprofit organizations have taken this approach, though their challenge is difficult. By the time some people upgrade their computer equipment, the old stuff isn't good for much.

All these alternatives, however, are Band-Aids on a festering problem. What's needed is a comprehensive, cradle-to-grave solution for technology and the hazardous substances associated with it.

Computer and electronics makers should build products that can be upgraded more easily, so consumers don't have to throw away the whole machine when they want to improve one part of

it.

The manufacturers should work to limit the amount of hazardous materials used in their products. And where those materials are essential, the hazardous parts should be arranged so that they can be easily removed by recyclers.

Government can help by promoting recycling and sponsoring collection drives that give the public a convenient way of disposing of their technology properly.

And finally, consumers have a big role to play by demanding that all the above parties contribute to a solution. Lean toward "green" technology, go the extra mile to recycle, ask your representatives when more recycling programs will be started.

A white Christmas is fine, but when it comes to technology, let's make it a green new year.

Life & Style

Lenny Bruce pardoned for 4-letter offense

By **MICHAEL GORMLEY**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Long after four-letter words in standup comedy lost their ability to shock, Lenny Bruce—whose foul-mouthed rants started the trend—was posthumously pardoned Tuesday for his 1964 obscenity conviction.

Gov. George Pataki granted the pardon after a campaign that included Bruce's daughter and former wife, and entertainers such as Robin Williams, the Smothers Brothers, and Penn and Teller.

"Freedom of speech is one of the greatest American liberties and I hope this pardon serves as a reminder of the precious freedoms we are fighting to preserve as we continue to wage the war on terror," Pataki said.

It was the first posthumous pardon in New York state history.

Bruce's supporters called Pataki's decision a victory for the First Amendment and for the legacy of the pioneering comic, who helped transform his art.

"He was a hero to comedians and to me also, a man who did not change his

viewpoints in spite of all the odds against him and never quit fighting for what he believed," Tommy Smothers said.

"That is important, probably more than the content, the ability to stand up and fight for the right to express oneself."

Bruce's trailblazing work opened the mainstream door for such comics as George Carlin, known for his "seven dirty words you can never say on television," Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy and Andrew Dice Clay.

Bruce was arrested during a November 1964 performance at Cafe Au Go Go in Greenwich Village. He used more than 100 "obscene" words, according to undercover New York City police detectives who attended the show, and was charged with giving an obscene performance.

Bruce's performances at the time were littered with four-letter words, and sexual references to Eleanor Roosevelt and St. Paul, among others.

Bruce was convicted after a six-month trial and then mishandled his own appeal, refusing to follow the court's rules. He was sentenced to four

months in jail but left the state and never served the term.

Despite Bruce's frenetic stage presence, carrying the mantle of free speech in the cultural wars of the 1960s wore him down. He died of a drug overdose in 1966 with his conviction still on the books.

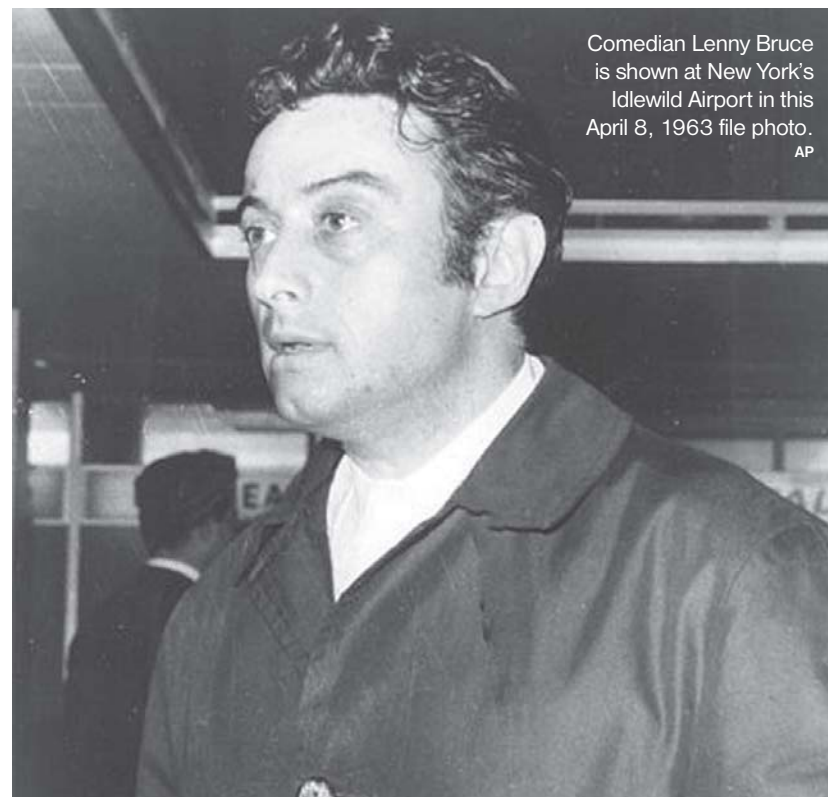
"He didn't choose to be a poster child for free speech," said Smothers, who lost his network TV show years later over pointed comedy about the Vietnam War and the Roman Catholic Church. "I think he was very uncomfortable with that."

Nightclub owner Howard Solomon was convicted along with Bruce—although his conviction was eventually reversed.

Floyd Abrams, a First Amendment lawyer who campaigned to pardon Bruce, said Pataki's decision was "a New Year's gift."

"I think the decision today is really a major step forward in recognizing the mistreatment of Lenny Bruce personally and of the First Amendment that Bruce defended," Abrams said.

Bruce's life was the subject of numerous articles, books and documentaries. In 1974, Bob Fosse's film biography,



Comedian Lenny Bruce is shown at New York's Idlewild Airport in this April 8, 1963 file photo. AP

"Lenny," earned Dustin Hoffman an Academy Award nomination.

In 1999, HBO aired "Lenny Bruce:

Swear to Tell the Truth," a documentary narrated by Robert De Niro that also was nominated for an Academy Award.

Publisher cancels rights to Clinton book

NEW YORK (AP)—The U.S. publisher of Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's memoirs has withdrawn rights for the Chinese translation, citing the Chinese publisher's unwillingness to restore passages critical of the government.

"They no longer have the right to print or sell the book," Adam Rothberg, a spokesman for Simon & Schuster, said Tuesday.

Simon & Schuster had learned in September that Yilin Press, a Chinese government-backed publisher, removed references in "Living History" to the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy protests, and altered Clinton's comments about human rights activist Harry Wu, who campaigns against abuses in the Chinese labor camps where he spent 19 years.

Simon & Schuster demanded an immediate reprinting of the complete, uncensored text. In response, Yilin sent an apologetic letter, saying the company had to rush the Chinese version to stores

to compete with counterfeit versions sold by street peddlers.

But after three months of negotiations, Simon & Schuster decided to cancel the contract. Efforts by The Associated Press to reach Yilin on Tuesday were unsuccessful. Yilin's deputy editor in chief, Liu Feng, told The New York Times that the company was still reviewing the situation.

Simon & Schuster has posted on its Web site the original versions of the censored sections, hoping to counteract the official action. A full translation was also published in neighboring Taiwan.

"Living History," for which Clinton earned an \$8 million advance, has sold 1.5 million copies in the United States alone, surpassing the mark for political autobiography set by Colin Powell's 1995 "My American Journey." Rothberg said that the Chinese translation had a first printing of 200,000 and that an additional printing had been planned.

The Boss tops 2003 concert earnings list

NEW YORK (AP)—Bruce Springsteen was the boss of the concert business in 2003, raking in \$115.9 million to rank second only to the Rolling Stones for the most money ever earned by a concert act in a year.

Springsteen and his E Street Band earned the money on 47 concerts, concluding their tour with a staggering 13 stadium shows in the New York area, the concert industry trade publication Pollstar reported Tuesday.

The Stones' \$121.2 million earned in 1994 still stands as the record, Pollstar said. The Stones brought in \$38.5 million this year, to rank 14th.

Springsteen's reported earnings don't count the concert dates he played outside of North America, or in 2002, when "The Rising" tour began.

Pollstar hasn't finished its calculations yet, but Editor Gary Bongiovanni predicted 2003 will be the fourth record-setting year in a row with around \$2.4 billion in concert business.

It's largely because fans have accepted higher ticket prices for big-name acts, particularly veterans, he said.

"Back in 1994 when the Eagles charged \$100 a ticket, there was practically rebellion in the streets," Bongiovanni said.

Four acts in Pollstar's top 10 earners for the year—Celine Dion, the Eagles, Simon & Garfunkel and the Billy Joel-Elton John double bill—charged more than \$100 per ticket, on average.

Simon & Garfunkel's first reunion tour in more than a decade averaged the

BEST SELLERS LIST

Nonfiction

Dude, Where's My Country?, by Michael Moore (Warner Books: \$24.95) Advice from the veteran gadfly on how to take back the country from the conservative forces currently running it.

Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them, by Al Franken (Dutton: \$24.95) A heaping dose of subversive wit aimed at political leaders and pundits on the right and left.

Schott's Original Miscellany, by Ben Schott (Bloomsbury: \$14.95) An eclectic compendium of facts, diagrams, symbols and just about everything you always wanted to know.

Who's Looking Out for You?, by Bill O'Reilly (Broadway: \$24.95) Talk-show host mixes outrage at corrupt politics, people and institutions with advice on how to identify whom to trust.

The Purpose-Driven Life, by Rick Warren (Zondervan: \$19.99) How the "God-ordained" principles of worship, community, discipleship, ministry and evangelism bring fulfillment.

The World According to Mister Rogers, by Fred Rogers (Hyperion: \$16.95) Some of the collected wisdom (and a few songs) from the late, beloved television personality.

The Power of Now, by Eckhart Tolle (New World Library: \$21.95) How to improve one's relationships and find contentment and even happiness by living in the now.

Living to Tell the Tale, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Knopf: \$26.95) The Nobel laureate describes his early life in Colombia and his parents and others who gave rise to his best-known characters.

Flyboys, by James Bradley (Little, Brown: \$29.95) A history of combat in the Pacific during World War II, centered on a group of U.S. Navy and Marine aviators captured by the Japanese.

I Am What I Ate and I'm Frightened! by Bill Cosby (Harper Entertainment: \$19.95) The comedian, having turned 65, contemplates the perils of aging.

Fiction

The Da Vinci Code, by Dan Brown (Doubleday: \$24.95) A Louvre curator's killing leads to clues hidden in Leonardo's paintings and a secret society with something to hide.

The Five People You Meet in Heaven, by Mitch Albom (Hyperion: \$19.95) An amusement park maintenance man faces his life, death and afterlife in this three-part parable.

Trojan Odyssey, by Clive Cussler (Putnam: \$27.95) Dirk Pitt rushes to rescue his undersea exploring twins as a mega-hurricane bears down on the Caribbean and a luxury floating hotel.

The Big Bad Wolf, by James Patterson (Little, Brown: \$27.95) Lawman Alex Cross investigates the disappearance of pretty women and uncovers a sex-slave ring run by a Russian mobster.

Old School, by Tobias Wolff (Knopf: \$22) A New England prep school scholarship student with literary ambitions tries to win an audience with Ernest Hemingway.

Dark Tower V: Wolves of the Calla, by Stephen King (Donald M. Grant/Scribner: \$35) Roland and friends fight to save the Dark Tower in an afflicted farm community and Midtown Manhattan.

The Murder Room, by P.D. James (Knopf: \$25.95) Adam Dalgliesh investigates an unpopular museum trustee's killing that echoes a famous homicide depicted in the museum's Murder Room.

The Pleasure of My Company, by Steve Martin (Hyperion: \$19.95) A man suffering from agoraphobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder copes with the vicissitudes of life.

The Hometown Nest, by Jimmy Carter (Simon & Schuster: \$27) Two Southern families caught up in the American Revolution as it was fought in Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas.

Bleachers, by John Grisham (Doubleday: \$19.95) An NFL player returns home to join a vigil for his dying high school football coach and meets a woman he abandoned years before. (*Los Angeles Times*)

Jackson timeline could be hard to explain

By LINDA DEUTSCH
AP SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LOS ANGELES (AP)—For jurors to convict Michael Jackson, they would have to believe he was so bold as to molest a boy while he was under investigation by child welfare authorities in a probe touched off by a TV documentary.

"It's a joke," Jackson attorney Mark Geragos told "Larry King Live" last week.

Legal experts said prosecutors will have a hard time trying to explain the timeline they set forth in their complaint against the 45-year-old singer.

Jackson was charged last week with seven counts of lewd acts with a child under 14; five of the incidents allegedly occurred between the approximate dates of Feb. 7 and March 10, the two others between the approximate dates of Feb. 20 and March 10.

Two additional counts allege Jackson gave the boy an "intoxicating agent," reportedly wine, also between Feb. 20 and March 10.

The British TV documentary aired nationwide Feb. 6 and prompted swift criticism of Jackson, who was shown holding hands with the boy who is now his accuser. In the documentary, Jackson said they slept in the same room at his Neverland estate but did not share a bed.

Between Feb. 14 and Feb. 27, Los Angeles County child welfare officers investigated Jackson's relationship with the child. The investigation was prompted by a school administrator who called a county hot line after watching the documentary.

A child-welfare agency memo re-

Michael Jackson performs "Dangerous" during taping of the American Bandstand's 50th anniversary show in this April 20, 2002, file photo in Pasadena, Calif.

AP



DA demands confirmation of Jackson's trip

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A prosecutor demanded that Michael Jackson, facing child molestation charges, prove that he plans to go to Britain to promote his new CD or surrender his passport.

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Tom Sneddon made the demand for "documented confirmation" on Jackson's plan to his attorney, Mark Geragos, in a faxed letter Monday.

Sneddon said in a statement that he sought confirmation of the planned

Dec. 20 to Jan. 6 promotional trip after hearing unspecified reports that the singer had canceled it. Geragos was not immediately available for comment Tuesday.

Jackson, 45, turned himself into authorities last month. He was charged Thursday with seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts upon a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent. He remains free on \$3 million bail.

Sneddon agreed to return Jackson's

passport last week after Geragos said the entertainer needed to fulfill contractual obligations related to his new CD, "Number Ones."

London's Sun newspaper reported Monday that Jackson had pulled out of a planned Christmas tour. But Jackson's spokesman, Stuart Backerman, said Monday that he believed the trip was still on.

"I'm not aware of any cancellation," Backerman said. "He still is planning to go as far as I know."

cently leaked to the media said that the boy, his siblings and their mother praised Jackson and told child-welfare

officers that nothing inappropriate between the two occurred.

"You'd have to believe that Michael

Jackson was molesting at the same time these interviews were going on," Los Angeles defense attorney Harland

Braun said.

Such a timeline does not work in the prosecution's favor, said Loyola Law School Professor Laurie Levenson.

"You'd have to believe that he was so bold that after being put on notice of an investigation, he continued the activity," she said.

Prosecutors said they were aware of the Los Angeles County findings when they sought search and arrest warrants for Jackson but dismissed their significance.

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Thomas Sneddon said the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services "conducted interviews, not an investigation."

Geragos has proclaimed the singer's innocence and said the accusations were motivated by greed.

Prosecutors can examine Limbaugh records

By JILL BARTON
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP)—Prosecutors investigating whether Rush Limbaugh illegally went "doctor shopping" for prescription painkillers can examine his medical records, a judge ruled Tuesday.

The conservative radio commentator accused prosecutors of going after him for political reasons, and his attorney promptly appealed the ruling.

Circuit Judge Jeffrey A. Winikoff said authorities have a compelling interest in determining whether Limbaugh broke the law, which trumps his right to keep his medical records private. However, the judge said prosecutors cannot make the records public.

Palm Beach County prosecutors insisted they needed to review the records to determine how much Limbaugh's doctors knew about his frequent prescriptions for OxyContin, hydrocodone and other painkillers, and whether he was "doctor shopping."

That term refers to looking for a doctor willing to prescribe drugs illegally, or getting prescriptions for a single drug from more than one doctor at the same time.

"Those records are the only way to clarify the violation of law that we're investigating," prosecutor James Martz argued.

Investigators seized records from Florida and California doctors last month after discovering that Limbaugh



AP

Talk radio host Rush Limbaugh prepares for his daily radio show in New York in this Nov. 17, 2003 file photo.

received more than 2,000 painkillers, prescribed by four doctors in a six-month period, at a pharmacy near his \$24 million Palm Beach mansion.

Limbaugh's attorneys argued that the seizure violated the broadcaster's privacy. Martz said the records were

taken to ensure they were not tampered with or destroyed.

Limbaugh recently admitted his addiction to painkillers, blaming severe back pain. He took a five-week leave from his afternoon national radio show to go into rehab.

During his Tuesday show, Limbaugh accused authorities of leaking information to damage his reputation, and said prosecutors have a political agenda.

"The Democrats still cannot defeat me in the arena of political ideas. And so now they're trying to do so in the court of public opinion and the legal system," Limbaugh said. Prosecutor Barry Krischer disputed the allegations.

Limbaugh's lawyer, Roy Black, said: "Mr. Limbaugh was not doctor shopping and he should not have to sacrifice his privacy to prove his innocence." He asked a judge to prohibit prosecutors from viewing the records until his appeal is decided.

Authorities began investigating Limbaugh last year after his former maid told them she had supplied him with prescription painkillers for years.

At a hearing Monday, Black said his client suffered from a degenerative disc disease with "pain so great at one point doctors thought he had bone cancer," but Limbaugh chose to take painkillers rather than undergo surgery. Surgery to reach the affected part of Limbaugh's spine could have threatened his voice, Black said.

Limbaugh's former maid, Wilma Cline, threatened to sell the story to The National Enquirer, Black said. She and her husband demanded millions from Limbaugh and were "paid substantial amounts," the lawyer said.

Black called the payments blackmail. The Clines' attorney, Ed Shohat, denied his allegation.

Katie Couric to host Peabody Awards ceremony

NEW YORK (AP)—Katie Couric, co-anchor of NBC's "Today" show, will host next year's George Foster Peabody Awards ceremony.

The 63rd annual awards ceremony will be held May 17 at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York.

Couric received a Peabody Award for her five-part series, "Confronting Colon Cancer." Her husband, television legal analyst Jay Monahan, died from colon cancer in 1998.

"Katie Couric is the consummate newscaster, at ease with presidents and prime ministers, with Hollywood celebrities and intellectual leaders," Horace Newcomb, director of the Peabody Awards Program at the University of Georgia, said in a statement Monday. "Her wide-ranging experience as a broadcaster is a perfect match for the Peabodys."

The Peabody Awards, which are administered by the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, recognize excellence and meritorious work by radio and television stations, networks, webcasters, producing organizations and individuals. Entry deadline for programs aired in 2003 is Jan. 15. Winners will be announced in April.

WALLACE

‘Spice’ husband wants to add to marriage makes wife sick

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: “Burt” and I have been married 14 years. We have two beautiful children—a boy and a girl—ages 8 and 11. Burt works in sales. I am a designer and run my business out of our home, so that I can be here when the children come home from school.

For the last couple of years, Burt has complained that the “spice” has gone out of our marriage. He did some Internet research and found a swingers group in our community. At first, he only did some chatting online, but now he wants us to go to one of their parties. I told him I’m against it, but he insists. The idea of exposing myself to strangers is mortifying. But the more I tell him no, the more insistent he becomes.

Should I agree to it to save our marriage?
WAVERING IN VIRGINIA

DEAR WAVERING: No. If you do, the dynamics of your marriage will change forever—and not for the better. Great sex is all about great communication. If a dish isn’t spicy enough, I see nothing to be gained by diluting it. To do something that makes you uncomfortable or is morally repugnant will not only not save your marriage, it could also be the straw that breaks the camel’s back. A healthier solution for what ails your marriage would be to consult a sex therapist or a marriage counselor.

DEAR ABBY: My husband has Parkinson’s disease with dementia. I have good friends who ask me to coffee or lunch to get me out of the house, but what I’d really like is if they’d ask my HUSBAND out to coffee or lunch. Every hour I’m away, I worry about him. Plus, I have not been by myself in this house for eight years. Please pass on a message to your readers. If you really want to help, offer to take out the ill person, and give the caregiver some quiet time.

NEEDING A BREAK

DEAR NEEDING: To expect someone not trained in caring for a patient with dementia to take the person out into unfamiliar surroundings is asking a lot. It may be too much responsibility for your friends to assume. A better solution would be to arrange for respite care for your husband. You could have your quiet time, or time alone in the house, by asking your husband’s doctor which senior centers in your vicinity are equipped to provide safe activities for him on a regular basis. Either that, or contact Faith in Action at www.FaithinAction.org or (877) 324-8411. It’s a national program that helps establish community programs providing volunteer care to neighbors with long-term health needs.

DEAR ABBY: I just returned from visiting my 26-year-old daughter, her 27-year-old live-in fiance and their 4-month-old twins. They live in Kansas, where they own their home, and both have good jobs. During dinner Saturday night, my daughter asked me if I plan to pay for their wedding next June. Am I obligated to help them financially?

THEY LIVE IN KANSAS

DEAR KANSAS: No, you are not. A wedding is a gift from the parent or parents. It is not, and should not be considered an obligation. Your daughter and her fiance are self-supporting and can pay for their own wedding. If you wish to contribute money toward their wedding, it would be a generous gift. But under no circumstances should you feel put on the spot to do so.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone—teens to seniors—is in “The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It.” To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby

Pastimes



NBA STANDINGS					
EASTERN CONFERENCE					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	G	
New Jersey	39	25	.609	-	
Philadelphia	37	26	.587	1 1/2	
Boston	37	27	.578	2	
Orlando	33	33	.500	7	
Washington	31	33	.484	8	
New York	28	36	.438	11	
Miami	21	43	.328	18	
Central Division					
Detroit	40	23	.635	-	
Indiana	38	27	.585	3	
New Orleans	37	29	.561	4 1/2	
Milwaukee	32	33	.492	9	
Atlanta	26	39	.400	15	
Chicago	23	43	.348	18 1/2	
Toronto	20	42	.323	19 1/2	
Cleveland	11	53	.172	29 1/2	
WESTERN CONFERENCE					
Midwest Division					
Dallas	48	15	.762	-	
San Antonio	45	18	.714	3	
Minnesota	42	25	.627	8	
Utah	37	27	.578	11 1/2	
Houston	33	30	.524	15	
Memphis	23	41	.359	25 1/2	
Denver	14	51	.215	35	
Pacific Division					
Sacramento	45	19	.703	-	
Portland	42	22	.656	3	
L.A. Lakers	35	28	.556	9 1/2	
Phoenix	33	30	.524	11 1/2	
Golden State	31	33	.484	14	
Seattle	28	34	.452	16	
L.A. Clippers	20	44	.313	25	

NBA STANDINGS		
EASTERN CONFERENCE		
Atlantic Division		
Team	W	L
New Jersey	31	14
Boston	26	19
Philadelphia	24	22
Orlando	24	23
Washington	22	24
New York	19	25
Miami	16	29
Central Division		
Indiana	33	13
Detroit	29	15
New Orleans	24	22
Milwaukee	22	22
Chicago	17	28
Atlanta	17	29
Toronto	11	34
Cleveland	9	37
WESTERN CONFERENCE		
Midwest Division		
Dallas	35	9
San Antonio	29	16
Minnesota	27	18
Utah	27	18
Houston	24	20
Memphis	13	31
Denver	10	35
Pacific Division		
Sacramento	32	14
Portland	28	16
Phoenix	26	21
L.A. Lakers	20	23
Seattle	20	23
Golden State	20	24
L.A. Clippers	17	28

NBA STANDINGS		
EASTERN CONFERENCE		
Atlantic Division		
Orlando	2	0
New Jersey	1	0
Philadelphia	1	1
Boston	0	1
Miami	0	1
New York	0	1
Washington	0	1
Central Division		
Chicago	1	0
Detroit	1	0
Indiana	1	0
Toronto	1	0
New Orleans	0	0
Atlanta	0	1
Cleveland	0	1
Milwaukee	0	1
WESTERN CONFERENCE		
Midwest Division		
Dallas	1	0
Minnesota	1	0
San Antonio	1	0
Utah	0	0
Denver	0	1
Houston	0	1
Memphis	0	1
Pacific Division		
Sacramento	1	0
Portland	1	0
Golden State	0	0
L.A. Clippers	0	0
Phoenix	0	0
Seattle	0	0
L.A. Lakers	0	2
Wednesday's Games		
Chicago 99, Boston 96		
Indiana 91, Houston 82		
Toronto 74, Washington 68		
Philadelphia 95, Milwaukee 93		
Orlando 100, Miami 86		
New Jersey 105, Atlanta 94		
Dallas 119, Memphis 108		
Minnesota 83, Denver 77		
Detroit 86, New York 77		
Portland 102, L.A. Lakers 90		

Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T
Giants	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	-	3	
Hustlers	1	0	1	4	2	0	0	5	-	13



SPORTS BRIEFS



Spurs defeat Mavericks, 111-104

Tony Parker scored a career-high 32 points, including seven free throws in the final minute, to lead the San Antonio Spurs to a 111-104 win over the division rival Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday night.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Yearend RGA champion tourney tomorrow

The Refaluwasch Golf Association will hold their yearend Club Champion Tournament tomorrow, December 14, at the Lao Lao West golf course.

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